

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

ILLUMINATING LUNA:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF MEANING  
IN A MONTRÉAL "NOUVELLE DANSE" EVENT

THESIS  
PRESENTED  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
DOCTORAT EN ÉTUDES ET PRATIQUES DES ARTS

BY  
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UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

*LUNA RÉVÉLÉE:*  
UNE ÉTUDE ETHNOGRAPHIQUE  
SUR LA SIGNIFICATION D'UN ÉVÉNEMENT  
DE « NOUVELLE DANSE » MONTRÉALAISE

VOLUME II

THÈSE  
PRÉSENTÉE  
COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE  
DE DOCTORAT EN ÉTUDES ET PRATIQUES DES ARTS

DE  
DENA DAVIDA

AOÛT 2006

*If the mystery of the human body  
meets the crystalline clarity of its  
unveiling, perhaps there will be more  
light within us. For me, the art of  
Ginette Laurin offers this  
illumination.*

*(From the program notes for Luna written by artist  
Rober Racine, 2000)*

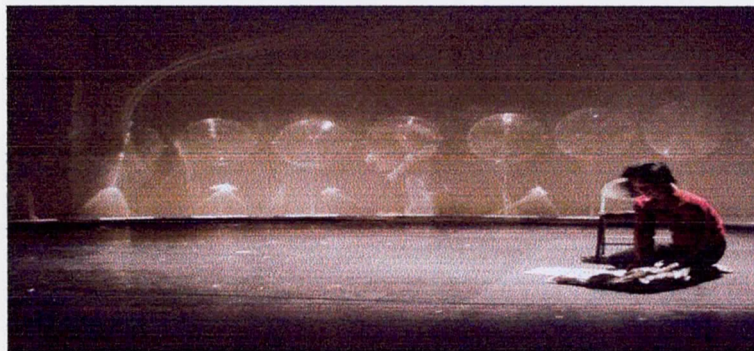


Photo of *Luna* in rehearsal, with dancer Chi Long in the foreground  
and the large lenses behind the scrim curtain, December 11, 2000

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(Note: Photos i and 1-18 were field photos taken by the researcher, except for photo 19 that was taken by her mother Ruth Kanin.)

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	(in back pocket of document cover)

# KEY TO REFERENCE CODES FOR FIELDNOTE, INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP EXCERPTS IN TEXT

## Fieldnote references:

FN            fieldnote reference with date of note taking (month-day-year)

## Focus group references (in chronological order):

FG1            audience focus group after a performance of *Luna* at the *Festival international de nouvelle danse* on September 22, 2001  
 FG2            audience focus group after a performance of *Luna* at the *Festival international de nouvelle danse* on September 23, 2001  
 FG3            audience focus group after a performance of *Luna* at the *Auditorium Dufour* in Chicoutimi on November 3, 2001  
 FG4            focus group with 10 students attending the *O Vertigo* summer workshop on August 16, 2001

## Interview references (in chronological order):

I-HB1            October 18, 1994, interview by Henri Barras with Ginette Laurin  
 I-HB2            January 1995, interview by Henri Barras with Ginette Laurin  
 I-PS            July 8, 1998, exploratory interview with Philip Szporer  
 I-MD            July 9, 1998, exploratory interview with Mélanie Demers  
 I-DR            August 5, 1998, exploratory interview with David Rose  
 I-LH            August 27, 1998, exploratory interview with Linde Howe-Beck  
 I-JK            June 12, 1999, interview with Joann Kealiinohomoku  
 I-GL1            June 2, 2000, first interview with Ginette Laurin  
 I-GL/PS          August 19, 2000, public talk between Ginette Laurin and Phillip Szporer  
 I-IG            December 6, 2000, interview with Isabelle Greaves  
 I-KN            December 8, 2000, interview with Kha Nguyen  
 I-MF            December 13, 2000, interview with Myriam Farger  
 I-PL            December 18, 2000, interview with Patrick Lamothe  
 I-D            March 1, 2001, informal short discussions with a group of dancers that included Patrick Lamothe, Mélanie Demers, Donald Weikart, Chi Long, Kha Nguyen and Antje Riede  
 I-SS            March 10, 2001, interview with Stefan Schwartz  
 I-JP            March 30, 2001, interview with Jocelyn Proulx  
 I-BL            May 4, 2001, interview with Bernard Lagacé  
 I-DL            June 11, 2001, interview with Denis Lavoie

I-CG	July 24, 2001, interview with Claude Gosselin
I-MR	August 24, 2001, interview with Marie-Claude Rodrigue
I-LL	August 28, 2001, interview with Line Lanthier
I-AR	September 19, 2001, interview with Antje Riede
I-MW	October 25, 2001, interview with Martin Wexler
I-IT	October 31, 2001, interview with Iro Tembeck
I-DB	December 19, 2001, interview with Diane Boucher
I-AM	January 28, 2002, interview with Axel Morgenthelar
I-LC	February 6, 2002, interview with Lise Clément
I-AB/RB	March 4, 2002, interview with Anne Barry and Raymond Brisson
I-GL2	March 7, 2002, second interview with Ginette Laurin
I-SB	April 11, 2002, interview with Stéphanie Brody
I-PC	May 2, 2002, interview with Pierre Chartrand
I-WH	May 3 and 5, 2002: interview with Walter Heun through email



## Résumé

« *Luna Révélée* » met en mouvement une étude ethnographique sur un événement de danse contemporaine original, conçu par la chorégraphe québécoise Ginette Laurin et sa compagnie de danse *O Vertigo*, oeuvrant dans la ville cosmopolite de Montréal. C'est ici que les pratiques chorégraphiques font du monde de la danse l'objet d'analyses en tant que comportements socioculturels. L'événement de *Luna* a suscité une multitude de significations chez ses participants, tout au cours de leur collaboration jouissive au processus de création de cette occasion « extra-ordinaire » de la performance de la chorégraphie *Luna*. Tel qu'élaboré par des études anthropologiques de la danse étudiant les formes de danse traditionnelles et sociales, la notion de l'événement de danse devient ici un cadre de référence pour comprendre la nature et la signification d'un événement de danse contemporaine (ou, comme l'appellent certains au Québec), de « nouvelle danse ».

Les paramètres de ce projet de recherche allaient bien au-delà des performances publiques de la chorégraphie *Luna*, pour englober l'événement dans son intégralité, de la conception jusqu'à l'après-événement. On y fait la description détaillée de la nature des différentes activités (quoi), de l'identité et le rôle de ceux qui y ont participé (qui), du lieu et de la date de l'événement (où et quand), mais surtout, de ce qui a poussé ces individus à participer (pourquoi). La quête du sens était au cœur du projet *Luna* et a pris deux formes particulières : (a) la façon dont l'événement de danse a créé un sens par rapport à un répertoire d'activités dans la vie des participants, et (2) les sortes de significations formulées concernant la performance *Luna*.

Cette étude est un prolongement du projet de Kealiinohomoku (1969/1970), qui a exploré les caractéristiques ethniques du ballet classique. Sa proposition que toute danse est ethnique a été reprise dans une anthologie publiée sous la direction de Marcus et Myers (1995) qui a fait une exploration plus poussée des rapports interdisciplinaires entre les artistes et les anthropologues au sein du « marché des arts » des musées, des galeries d'art et des festivals. Cette recherche s'inspire aussi de la thèse de doctorat publiée par Novack (1990) sur l'Improvisation en Contact, l'étude de Wulff (2000) sur la carrière des danseurs de ballet, et l'analyse culturelle du ballet *Casse-Noisette* de Fisher (2003). Elle est fondée sur les discours et les théories du domaine de l'anthropologie de la danse, se nourrit de la tradition récente de faire « de l'anthropologie chez soi », et des nouveaux développements dans le domaine de l'esthétique, « sensuous scholarship » (recherches à travers les sens), la théorie de la réception et de la perception, et les études culturelles de la danse.

Les méthodes de collecte de données utilisées dans cette étude de cas comprennent un travail approfondi sur le terrain d'une durée de deux ans, trente entrevues en profondeur et quatre groupes de discussion (dont les propos des participants ont été enregistrés et transcrits). Parmi les méthodes

utilisées, on retrouve également des photographies sur le terrain et la collection de divers documents ainsi que d'autres types d'artéfacts (vidéo, affiche, CD-ROM, etc.). Les documents écrits ont été entrés dans une base de données informatique, puis codifiés, paragraphe par paragraphe, à l'aide du logiciel NUDIST. L'interprétation des données dans le texte final a permis de faire la synthèse globale des idées, des théories, des opinions et des croyances des participants, de la chercheuse et des théoriciens.

Les résultats ont révélé qu'une pratique de danse, bien que peu connue du public en général, était très valorisée par sa propre sous culture constituée de praticiens passionnés : artistes, étudiants, spécialistes, membres du personnel et spectateurs. À partir du cas d'un événement d'envergure, l'étude *Luna* a décrit quelques-unes des caractéristiques toutes particulières de la danse artistique : un long processus de création, le statut professionnel de l'artiste, et l'esthétique internationaliste (et indigène), la re-crédation d'un événement 'en tournée', c'est-à-dire transposé et transformé dans différentes villes, et les nombreux et disparates types de sens et de modes d'interprétation parmi les participants. Mais avant tout, cette étude ethnographique de *Luna* offre aux anthropologues et aux chercheurs dans le domaine de la danse une méthodologie et un fondement pour explorer les significations des pratiques de danse artistique contemporaine dans le contexte holistique de « l'événement de danse ».

(Traduit de l'anglais par Rachelle Renaud)

Mots clés : Anthropologie de la danse, danse contemporaine, ethnographie, études culturelles sur la danse

## **Abstract**

"Illuminating Luna" sets into motion an ethnographic study of a contemporary dance event, uniquely conceived by Québécoise choreographer Ginette Laurin and her dance company *O Vertigo* who are situated in the cosmopolitan city of Montréal. It is here that choreographic dance world practices are socio-cultural behaviours. The *Luna* event evoked a multiplicity of meanings for participants as they interacted cooperatively to create and enjoy the extra-ordinary occasion of the *Luna* dance performance. As developed by dance anthropologists studying traditional and social dance forms, the dance event framework here becomes a template for understanding the nature and meaning of a contemporary or (as some call it in Québec) "*nouvelle danse*" event.

The parameters of this research project are not limited to public performances of the *Luna* choreography, but included the entire span of the event from conception to aftermath and a wide range of participant groups. This project delineates a detailed account of what were the various activities, who was involved and what they did, and where and when the event was situated, but especially, why they participated. The quest for meaning is at the heart of the *Luna* project and takes two specific forms: (a) how the dance event made meaning as part of a repertoire of activities in the lives of its participants, and (2) the kinds of meanings that were formulated about the *Luna* performance.

This study is a continuity of Kealiinohomoku's project (1969/1970) in which she elaborated the ethnic characteristics of classical ballet. Her proposal that all dances are ethnic was later carried forward in an anthology edited by Marcus and Myers (1995) that further explored the interdisciplinary relationships between artists and anthropologists within the "arts marketplace" of museums, galleries and festivals. This research also draws on Novack's published doctoral research (1990) on Contact Improvisation, Wulff's study (2000) on the professional life of ballet dancers and Fisher's cultural analysis (2003) of the *Nutcracker Ballet*. It is also grounded in discourses and theories from the emerging field of dance anthropology, benefits from the recent tradition of doing "anthropology at home", and from current developments in aesthetics, "sensuous scholarship", reception and perception theory, and the cultural studies of dance.

Data collection employed in this case study includes extensive fieldwork over a two-year period, 30 in-depth interviews and 4 focus groups (data recorded and transcribed). They also involved field photography and the collection of various documents as well as other kinds of artefacts (videotape, poster, CD ROM, etc.). Written materials were entered into a computer database, and later coded one paragraph at a time, assisted by NUDIST software. Interpretation of the data in the final text weaves together

the ideas, theories, views and beliefs of participants, researcher and theoreticians.

The findings reveal a dance practice that, although little known to the public in general, is highly valued by its own subculture of ardent practitioners: dance artists, students, specialists, personnel and spectators. Through the case of one large-scale event, the *Luna* study delineates some of the unique characteristics of contemporary artistic dance: a long creative process, the professional status of its artists, an internationalist (and indigenous) aesthetic, the remounting and transformation of the event as it tours to different cities, and the many disparate kinds of meaning and modes of interpretation among its participants. But most of all, this ethnographic study of *Luna* offers anthropologists and dance researchers a methodology and rationale for examining the meaning of contemporary, artistic dance practices in the holistic context of "the dance event" framework.

Keywords : Dance anthropology, contemporary dance, ethnography, cultural studies of dance

## PART 1

### INTRODUCTION, THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The challenge of dance anthropology lies in finding ways to reveal and understand the webs of meaning created through the dance event. [...] The challenge in writing about dance from an anthropological perspective lies in simultaneously evoking the particular experience and the shimmering life which it refracts and reflects; the meanings and implications of dance, indeed, of all performed art, are embedded in the experiences of the art itself [...]. (Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull, a.k.a. Novack, 1997, pp. 269-270)

Heeding Novack's call, *Illuminating Luna* set into motion an ethnographic study of a contemporary dance event, from the unique viewpoint of "dance event presenting," evoking the beliefs and experiences of its various participant groups (artists, personnel, audiences and specialists). At the centerpiece of the dance event in this research project is a single case study of *O Vertigo* dance's *Luna* dance performance. *Luna* was a dance contemporary dance work envisioned and created by Québécoise choreographer Ginette Laurin, and performed in 40 cities across Europe and the Americas. More than forty years after the postmodern dance movement was instigated by the Judson Church Group in New York City (Banes, 1980),

this study re-examines the values and practices of this kind of large-scale and highly valued dance event in a post-Judson era.

The anthropological concept of “the dance event framework” was employed as a framework for characterizing and understanding this contemporary dance or, as some would call it in Québec, “*nouvelle danse*” event. This study was divided into three parts: a section with introductory matter, a descriptive story of the dance event, and an interpretation of meaning for event participants. It was further organized around the questions of what kinds of activities occurred (Chapter IV), who were the participants (Chapter V), where and when the event took place (Chapter VI), but especially why and how it had meaning for those engaged in it (Chapters VII and VIII). The quest for meaning took two forms: (a) how the *Luna* dance event made meaning as part of its participants’ repertoire of life activities (Chapter VII), and (b) how and what kinds of meanings were apprehended and formulated about the *Luna* performance by those who were present (Chapter VIII).

The parameters of this *Luna* research project included not only the public performances found at the core of the event. But they also embraced the wider span of the event from conception, through preparation, throughout several performances, and even to an imagined aftermath. This text reflected a desire to seize and incorporate the participants’ voices as well as to situate the event as part of an international arts marketplace, and so to locate the dance event within particular geographic, socio-cultural and economic circumstances.

As discussed further in the methodology chapter, this case study was chosen for five reasons: (a) *O Vertigo* is one of several large-scale dance companies in Québec which could offer a rich pool of data on the many aspects of dance event presenting; (b) the company was highly valued in the larger context of an international dance touring circuit; (c) choreographer Laurin was exceptionally welcoming and cooperative about allowing me to



enter her environment; (d) the *Luna* choreographic project was timely in terms of my academic deadlines; and (e) *O Vertigo* was based in Montréal, and so one of several possible choices that suited my orientation towards doing “anthropology at home” within my local dance community.

As far as I have been able to determine, only three ethnographic research projects on the subject of Western artistic dance forms (classical ballet and contemporary dance) have thus far been published in book form. One is an excursion into the backstage life of ballet dancers by Wulff (2000), another an ethno-history of the American postmodern dance form Contact Improvisation by Novack (1995), and the most recent is a sociological analysis of *The Nutcracker* ballet viewed as an American ritualistic tradition by Fisher (2003). All have used ethnographic methodology and methods, and the researchers like myself had been native at some point in their lives to the dance communities they studied. They all discussed certain aspects of dance performances at various points, but none oriented their study from the viewpoint of an event in the anthropological sense.

The introductory matter that follows begins by revealing the underlying purposes and motives for this study. Next, in the spirit of auto-reflexivity, self-disclosure and to better inform the readers of the researcher's point of view, I narrate pertinent autobiographical events that led to the conception of this research project. And then, initial working definitions are developed in order to situate key concepts underlying this project. Finally, a synthesis of the organization of the thesis and a concluding statement complete this introductory chapter.

### 1.1 Underlying purposes and motives

The idea of this study sprang directly from Kealiinohomoku's challenge to Western dance scholars (especially historians) in the 1970s in her

essay "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance" (1969/1970). In it she affirmed that in the "generally accepted anthropological view, ethnic means a group which holds in common genetic, linguistic and cultural ties" and so "by definition, therefore, every dance form must be an ethnic form" (p. 30). In other words, all dances are ethnic as Buckland (1999b) quipped in her essay by the same title. Furthermore, Kealiinohomoku (1969/1970) urged dance scholars to reconsider their claims for ballet as a universal or international form by producing evidence that it is in fact a product of a particularly situated Western heritage in terms of its themes, roles, body image, and so on. She characterized classical ballet in terms such as "a dance form developed by Caucasians who speak Indo-European languages and who share a common European tradition" (p. 31-32) <sup>1</sup>. Thirty-five years later only a few dance researchers have taken up her challenge by bringing ballet's historical modern and postmodern progeny into the fold of anthropology.

As an insider who has spent 30 years working in several contemporary dance communities in the United States and Canada, I felt certain that -- because their *métier* is for the most part marginalized, physically dangerous and poorly remunerated -- most dance professionals ask themselves at some time or another "why do I dance?" The question of why we dance is a time-honored anthropological one, but occidental dance anthropologists have as yet paid most of their attention either to dances in faraway lands, or when they do study dances "at home," have chosen to work in the field with traditional and social dance forms and communities. As did Novack (1990), I applied theories and methods that were articulated by dance anthropologists as they researched dance from a cultural perspective (i.e. by way of beliefs, values and social organization). And so, I began and concluded this project with the conviction that contemporary dancers might

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<sup>1</sup>Wulff (1998) studied the backstage lives of ballet dancers in three cities, making claims for ballet as a transnational set of practices wherever it exists, but not as a universal dance form.

gain a deeper understanding of how and why they dance from dance anthropologists.

My initial intention was to pry open wider the usual framework that has been applied by dance scholars and critics when examining contemporary choreographies. In other words, they have generally limited themselves to a study of three phenomena: (a) the completed choreography (either as an autonomous aesthetic object or in terms of its/a live performance); (b) the perceptions of its audiences (in a field called reception theory); and (c) the interpretations and critiques of choreographies by specialists (dance criticism of the journalistic and philosophical variety). The framework for the contemporary dance event proposed here is visibly larger than that which contains these three phenomena, being inclusive of the entire process from dance preparation and its aftermath. This dance event framework also acknowledged the contribution of all manners of participants who engaged in any aspect of the dance event (e.g. stage house and dance company technicians, *O Vertigo's* board of director's president, dance historian, theater venue's staff, etc.). Dance critics and scholars were seen here to assume the role of expert and influential dance event participants, "expressive specialists" in the words of Ronström (1988, p. 26), in addition to their appearance in this ethnography as theoretical mentors for the analytical sections.

My choice of doing ethnography was also, in part, a form of resistance to some of the theories and methods of critical and cultural studies scholars (more about this in the next chapter). It seemed to me that their texts were increasingly moving dance research towards an eloquent but esoteric turn, creating an increasingly closed system of dance discourse. What I have also found through readings of their texts is that the author-researchers' voices largely predominate, and tend to be authoritative in tone telling us "how it is for others" (e.g. Cooper-Albright, 1997; Foster, 1997; Martin, 1998; and many others). That is why I have strived here to give as much weight as possible to the voices of dance event participants. To the extent that this doctoral process

has allowed, I aimed to write with clarity and simplicity, keeping in mind a potential readership from the very dance community under scrutiny in the *Luna* project.

As for the choice of doing fieldwork, there is a part of the dance event process from which I had been scrupulously absent for ethical reasons since becoming a dance presenter: the choreographer's creative process in the studio prior to the first public performance. It is during these dance studio sessions that the choreographer's vision is fleshed out and negotiated, mediated as it were between her/himself, the dancers and other artistic collaborators. Long ago I decided not to intervene in the dance-making process in view of the dangers of censorship, tempered by a belief that choreographers work best when unhampered by the demands of powerful sponsors and their tastes. By choosing fieldwork as my methodology and in my new role as ethnographer, I was obliged to spend hundreds of hours observing a choreographer and dancers at work. The need to experience and learn about dances from the perspective of their creative processes had become overwhelming.

As the concluding chapter elaborated, after having portrayed the *Luna* event in detail, this study crystallized a unique portrait of contemporary dance practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The understanding that was gained here about the nature and meaning of this kind of dance event from an anthropological perspective has already transformed my own presenting practice. And I am certainly hoping that it holds a potentially useful model for rethinking the dynamics of arts presenting for my art world colleagues in the international community.

## 1.2 Biographical events contributing to this study

Among the multitude of participant's biographies inscribed into this ethnography, and in the spirit of self-revelation, I felt it was important that the dance story of the narrator/researcher also be told. How else might the reader become aware of the "filter" through which this research was undertaken and written up and so the biases which provided its orientation, its world view? As much as this imperative to acknowledge subjectivity and context has become part of the cultural studies project, it is also a tenet of academic credibility and trustworthiness for qualitative researchers (Anfara, Brown and Magione, 2000, pp. 28-38). These biographical notes situate me as a particular kind of dance event participant and insider. Also in this section, I felt it was possible to allow a little poetic fluidity to surface, because discussing my own memories.

To begin, I was recently struck by a photograph of myself (photo 19) when five years old, that resurfaced in my mother's archives. It was 1954 and there I was in the sandy backyard of my grandmother's house on the Pacific Coast of California, spinning with abandon. Eyes were closed, hair flying, skirt billowing like a sand dollar. Memory has failed. Was I imagining myself as a toddler dervish, an apprentice ballet dancer or simply taking childish pleasure in the sensation of dizziness? I now wonder if I was among those children for whom physical expressivity is irrepressible, as proved to be true for most of the *Luna* dance professionals.

It is now clear to me that seeds for this ethnographic doctoral project originated in early adulthood. It was in San Francisco in the 1960s, when Eastern culture was infiltrating Occidental youth culture, that I made brief and fervent excursions into the study of Bharata Natyam and dances from (an unnamed part of) Africa. I pursued these dances along with many of my cohorts as a way of confronting challenging new dance skills and seeking out what we felt were more spiritual philosophies. In the spirit of the times, we



were pursuing rebellious excursions outside of the confines of the Euro-American dance academy into "exotic" dances from some distant Third World. Somehow the noble postures of the classical and modern dance training techniques I had studied while at university came to seem absurdly mannered and, most of all, decidedly elitist. They had become out of sync with my own contemporary life and beliefs. And since these dances from Africa and India required Occidental women to assume unfamiliar ways of being and moving, our teachers provided us with copious contextual material about their aesthetic philosophies and cultural contexts. For instance, I can still picture my U.S.-born East Indian dance teacher instructing us to slap a relaxed foot quickly and forcibly against the floor so that it produced a sharp smacking sound. As we practiced the painful movement she motivated our efforts with a philosophical insight: "When it hurts, that's when the sweetness comes." At the time, I understood this to mean that we would attain spiritual enlightenment through pain. It occurs to me now that this was not unlike Western ballet training! In other words, these classes and consequent performances provided an early awakening to the idea of dance as the embodiment of cultural behaviors and beliefs.

I uncovered yet another sign of my future interest in the socio-cultural aspects of dancing within my passion for political activism during the 1960s. Like so many others of the "sixties generation," I engaged whole-heartedly in a series of social movements: feminism, ecology, pacifism, socialism, sexual freedom, food cooperatives, communal living and so on. The field of ideas that were honed through these social movements became part of the foundation for my current feminist and humanist belief system. At the same time, I began to question the pertinence of studio dance training to this revolutionary outlook. As I still recall, the rigorous ballet bars and studious modern dance classes actually provided me with a haven from the turmoil of political work. It seems that at that time my compulsion to dance was as

strong as my desire to improve the world. Or, as I finally asked myself one fateful day, could the world be changed by dancing?

I soon became a professional dancer, teaching and performing in one of the established modernist dance traditions (Nikolais technique). I also taught dance in elementary school classrooms, to a women's self-help group, and among disadvantaged high school children. Increasing body awareness and introducing creative movement as a means to "self-realization" (the personal is political as we feminists were proposing) were my teaching objectives at the time. One day I joined a dance class offered by Mary Cerny, because intrigued by the course description, and so found myself participating in the development of a dance form newly baptized Contact Improvisation. It was through this emerging dance form that I finally discovered a way to dance that embodied not only personal movement preferences, but also my social and political beliefs. For instance, this was a feminist way of dancing, giving men and women equal opportunity to carry and support each other, to lead and to follow, to push and pull. It was humanistic, not prescribing an ideal body type or prerequisite set of physical skills, available to all who wanted to move sensually and cooperatively with others. This playful and tactile duet form in which two partners improvise a dance by sharing weight through a physical point of contact, seemed to me a metaphor for tolerance and pacifism.<sup>2</sup> Most Contact dancers had adopted ecologically sensitive lifestyles, and the intimate touching involved in this kind of dancing seemed to many of us at the time to spring from the new openness towards the expression of sexuality. The organization of Contact jams, performance events and classes was based on non-hierarchical networking models. In her ethnohistory of the new dance form, Novack (1990) explained how she perceived the link between Contact and American alternative culture of the 1970s:

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<sup>2</sup>This is a period in my life that I find richly portrayed in Novak's ethnohistory of Contact Improvisation (1990).



Contact improvisation demonstrates how dance is a part of life and culture – as metaphor for social interaction and values, as a focal point for different kinds of organizations and institutions, and, not least of all, as the direct apprehension of moving with and for a community of people. (Novack, 1990, p. 235)

The specific moment that led me to dance anthropology was a first reading of Joann Kealiinohomoku's essay "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance" (1969/1970). The socio-cultural context of my own life-long art dance practice suddenly sprang into view. This compelling idea of seeking out the ethnicity of contemporary dance was soon to become the motif of the keynote essay for my master's thesis (later published in Davida, 1993 and 1997). In the summers of 1984 through 1987 at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, I was a mature graduate student at mid-point in the Masters in Movement Studies program whose mandate was the "study [of] human movement as an interdisciplinary topic using perspectives provided by various fields in the humanities and social sciences" (Summer 1984). During four summer sessions within the Movement Studies program, I had my first encounters with scholars in several fledgling fields of dance theory. Among my professors it was Susan Foster, Cynthia Novack and Dianne Woodruff who were to become mentors for this current ethnographic project.

During our Wesleyan class "Anthropological Perspectives on Dance and Movement," Foster offered techniques for critical reading. Class readings included hundreds of pages on "the body" and "dancing" that she had culled from 20th century texts of Euro-American anthropologists. She sent us out into the field of a theatrical dance performance on campus, and showed us how to "make the familiar strange" through researching and writing an ethnographic study of a local dance group. Although I haven't

followed Foster's lead all the way to her advocacy of a neo-Marxist, critical analysis (e.g. Foster, 1986), she was the first who plunged me into the history and ideologies of dance-minded anthropologists. In another vein, Woodruff's "Movement Analysis" class provided my first academic introduction to Laban Movement Analysis, a theoretical basis for observation, description and interpretation of dance movement. I continued intensive studies with the Laban Institute, eventually becoming a Certified Movement Analyst. But Woodruff's importance to this project also lies in her later role as my master's thesis director, when she was the first scholar to suggest that my thinking was in fact analytic. And although I was never her student, my late colleague Cynthia Novack continues to be of central importance through her writings on American dance anthropology, and my professional contacts with her as an interviewed subject for her doctoral research while at Wesleyan.

It was during my Wesleyan studies that I first came across Kealiinohomoku's essay (1969/1970) on ballet. Suddenly, through the common denominator of ethnicity, my small contemporary dance world seemed inevitably linked to a larger world of dancers. One morning at the end of a class she was teaching in the summer of 1990 called "The Anthropological Bases for Dance," I asked her: "I understand what you are saying about ballet, but what about postmodern dance?" It was then that she gave me her fateful answer: "That is, of course, *your* project."

It was during that same summer class that I also discovered Kealiinohomoku's still unpublished doctoral dissertation "Theory and Methods for an Anthropological Study of Dance" (1976). This encounter was decisive in developing some of the theoretical bases for this ethnography more than three decades later. It was in her methods text that I first encountered the idea that "dance is a universal human imperative" (1976, p. 2) and that because it exists in some form in every culture it must therefore be a purposeful activity (pp. 5-11). This notion exploded in my mind. Could

the contemporary dance I was doing be thought of as fulfilling a vital *social* purpose? I had come to believe that the dancing which consumed my passion was little more than the self-indulgent, somewhat narcissistic need for self-expression of a small group of artists and their voyeuristic audiences! It seemed clear to me at the time that these kinds of dances sustained limited public interest and funding. And so I carried this question throughout my consequent studies: what might be the purpose for the contemporary dance practice that I was engaged in?

Throughout the 1980s, as I was undertaking masters' studies, I began to organize supporting structures to facilitate dance presentation in my recently adopted city of Montréal. It began with teaching Contact Improvisation classes then organizing a performance group. This led me to presenting informal studio showings of touring dance improvisors, a city-wide choreographer's collective, a museum-sponsored series of new choreography from Montréal and Toronto, an international dance festival, and finally to co-founding the *Tangente* dance performance space with three dance colleagues: Howard Abrams, Louis Guillemette, and Silvy Panet-Raymond. My present day (and evening) job is that of artistic director of this small-scale venue. It is this vocational orientation that provided the rationale for my choice of the dance event framework as the subject of this ethnography. For it is from the viewpoint of a "dance presenter" that I have organized my ethnographic story. But I am currently engaged in several other dance world roles as well: Contact Improvisor, Laban Movement Analyst, university teacher and researcher, dance writer and consultant. All have contributed to my analysis and understanding of the dance event.

### 1.3 Working definitions of basic concepts

In this section I set out to articulate working definitions for several fundamental notions that give ground to this dissertation: culture, dance ethnology, contemporary dance and *nouvelle danse*, and the dance event. They are briefly developed here in view of seizing their sense in the context of this study, but will be more fully fleshed out in the theory and methodology chapters to follow.

#### 1.3.1 Culture and dance ethnology

In Kuyper's historical and interpretive account (1999) about the notion of culture <sup>3</sup>, he proposed that it has been a privileged domain of anthropologists ever since an early "burst of cultural theorizing" between the 1920s and 1950s (p. 5). He observed that within a thriving international market in cultural discourse there is at least consensus on one point: that culture is a way to talk about collective identities (p. 3).

Kuyper recalled that etymological traces were embedded in the culture concept from the 18th century German Romantic doctrine of *Kultur* that championed an authentic, folk culture and in which language and spiritual values were vital components (2000, pp. 5-9). He also recounted its 19th century roots, in which culture was conceived of as that which is learned, acquired and borrowed, and set in opposition to Darwinian biological theories of natural laws (p. 11). Kuyper (1999) also pointed out that the 1950s were marked by a science-minded approach to the culture concept by Kluckhohn and Kroeber (in Kroeber, 1953). In brief, these culture theorists proposed an anthropological definition of culture as a collective, symbolic

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<sup>3</sup>In this study, I have been careful not to confuse the concept of culture that I have employed here, with another one that is implied by Western aesthetic philosophers. When they discuss the value of "acquiring culture" they are referring to the cultivation of a taste for the "high" arts and humanities.

discourse on knowledge, beliefs and values. The next generation, Kuyper concluded, characterized culture as an even more powerful concept, claiming that people lived in a world of symbols of their own making, and that culture is actually a fiction composed of local meanings created by ethnographers (pp. 16-17). While I adhere to this idea of culture as a fiction, this ethnography puts forward not only the ethnographer's story of the dance event, but strives to allow participants' voices to predominate in creating its narrative. To add a final perspective, Kealiinohomoku's notion of culture (1976) as expressed in her thesis and closely related to Kluckhohn and Kroeber's above, envisioned it as a dynamic and on-going process "learned by individuals, expressed by groups, influenced by its total environment, [that] has continuity through time, and value relative to each society" (p. 1).

With these definitions of culture in mind, let me now locate this research project in the field of cultural anthropology. This is one of four branches of general anthropology -- physical, cultural and linguistic anthropology, and archeology -- which in general encompass the study of the biological and cultural systems of humankind. The cultural branch is usually thought to embrace the beliefs, values and social organization that distinguish one community from another.

Dance ethnology in terms of this study refers principally to the North American school of the cultural anthropology of dance, one which views dances as microcosms of certain aspects of the larger culture and as purposeful activities in themselves and within society (Sklar, 1991b). Dance ethnology was the name given to the nascent discipline by Elsie Dunin and Allegra Fuller Snyder when they founded the first university program in that field in the 1970s within the Dance Department of University of California at Los Angeles (Snyder, 1992; Frosch, 1999). Also in that formative period, the field was called the anthropology of dance, a term which appeared as the name of Royce's groundbreaking book on the subject (1977), and also in the title of Kealiinohomoku's thesis (1976). In contrast, the British fostered the

concept of social anthropology, different from the cultural genre mainly because of its emphasis on the social aspect with its structure, institutions, roles and social relations (Barrett, 1996). They fostered the idea of dance anthropology as a sub-discipline of the larger social anthropology project (see Sklar, 1991b; Grau, 1993; Williams, 1991). Yet another branch of the field, most common among those European folklore specialists interested in dance, was named “ethnochoreology” by its proponents. Its goals as described by Giurchescu (1999) were the study of “dancing as a means of expressive communication which connects dancers, musicians and audience in an intricate network of relationships which takes place in different social contexts” (p. 44). Discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter, the ideological basis of this doctoral research will be largely drawn from American school of dance ethnology, with some ideas borrowed from the British and Eastern European schools of thought.

### 1.3.2 Ethnography

This study benefits from the field and practice of ethnography. By this I am referring to doing extensive fieldwork within a particular community of dance event participants, and at the same time to writing a descriptive, interpretive and analytical narrative based on participants’ stated and observed views and understandings, as well as my own meta-perceptions of findings that emerged from the data.

As a novice ethnographer, I was initially guided by definitions like those of Desmond (2000) who described ethnographies as “[...] complex descriptions and analysis of social structure and practices [...]” (p. 45). Another mentor was feminist anthropologist Skeggs (1995) who explained ethnographic approaches (as did many others as well) as combinations of different methods such as (a) accounting for context and for the relationships



developed between researcher and researched, (b) doing prolonged fieldwork in participants' "natural" settings, and (c) engaging the researcher to both participation and observation (p. 192). Frosch (1999) added yet another insight when she described the dynamics of ethnography as striving "to understand [...] indigenous categories and intentions" in order to discover "how dance means in relationship to the context of which it is a part" (p. 250). This was the heart of Geertz's proposal in the book that in 1973 did much to instigate this kind of "interpretive" approach, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, whose heritage deeply informs my understanding of ethnography.

The notion of ethnography also refers to the written description and interpretation, as suggested by the Greek and Latin root of the suffix "-graphy": *graphia* from the verb *graphein*. Among its several meanings are writing, description and discourse, or as Geertz wrote about both the act and its consequences,

[t]he ethnographer 'inscribes' social discourse; he writes it down. In so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted. (1978, p. 19)

I approached these ethnographic writing tasks as both investigative and literary experiences. They were guided by conventions whose practical applications were initially clarified for me by one of the many detailed methods guides *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995). Among other things, these authors raised my awareness of the nature and various forms of writing involved in doing fieldwork. The consciousness with which I undertook writing tasks was also informed by recent debates and counter-debates about the "construction of ethnographic texts" (see for instance Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Sanjek, 1990; Marcus and Meyers, 1995; James, Dawson and Hockey, 1997). These theorists of the so-called "literary



turn," and for whom all the world's phenomena are characterized as "texts" to be "decoded," have caused me to reflect on how choice of writing style and syntax shaped meaning every time I put pen to paper or fingertips to keys -- whether in the jotting down of fieldnotes and their writing up, the supervision of written transcriptions made from recorded interviews, phases of the coding processes, or in the various stages of the final shaping of the ethnographic write-up.

### 1.3.3 Contemporary dance and *nouvelle danse*

What kind of dancer, dance event and dancing are at issue in the *Luna* event? As did many of the event's participants, let me clarify at the onset that I will be referring to it in this document as simply "contemporary dance" when speaking about the genre in general. But when writing about the local Montréal variety, I will favor the Québécois expression "*nouvelle danse*."

Before attempting to situate this way of dancing among others, it is pertinent to note that the very notion of what dance is and is not, is still subject to on-going debate among dance philosophers and anthropologists (e.g. Cohen and Copeland, 1983; Kaeppler, 1978; Sparshott, 1995). One of Keallinohomoku's proposals for a cross-cultural definition (1969/1970) offered a logical starting point for this study in which she wrote that dance can be seen to exist when it "is recognized as dance both by the performers and the observing members of a given society" (p. 541).

The *Luna* choreography is the kind of professional dance that takes place in societies that differentiate between dances that are art from those dances classified as non-art. Kealiinohomoku (1976) traced the Western concept of dance as art back to the Greeks, characterized by its scholars as those dances that captured rarified dance forms performed by virtuosic dancers. In the dance world of the *Luna* event, government arts agencies, programmers, the dance milieu itself and dance specialists require dancers to

meet ever-changing and diverse criteria to attain the status of professional artist. But from the evidence of several official definitions of professional dancer (discussed in Chapter IV, section 5.2) it appears that there is institutional support for Aristotle's contention that professional dancers are "those who give their lives to dancing" (in Sparshott, 1995, p.30) and so consider dancing as their profession. Among the many kinds of existing professional dance, the contemporary variety at issue in *Luna* is the historical offspring of classical ballet, or as Marcus and Myers (1995) explained it, "[...] the contemporary, Western-centered tradition of fine arts that began with the birth of modernism [...] out of the previously dominant Academy system in nineteenth century France" (p.3).

Of all terms used by dance historians to describe the kind of dancing in *Luna*, it seemed to me from frequent conversations and readings over the years that "contemporary" (*contemporaine* in French) was the most frequently used by Montréalers. And the name *nouvelle danse* has been only one of several terms commonly heard in Montréal, as in other Francophone countries, to describe the kind of dancing at issue here, along with *danse actuelle* and *nouveau bouger*. It was initiated and popularized by the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*. I settled on the use of *nouvelle danse* for several reasons: (a) it reflects the distinct Francophone character of the Montréal dance milieu; (b) it is commonly heard and understood by Montréal dancers; and (c) it is easily integrated into English text both as a noun and an adjective. Of course this is the kind of historical category that becomes ironic in time, as what is *nouvelle* one day eventually becomes *passé*.

I also put aside several other possible English and French terms to distinguish the contemporary kind of dance in this study of the *Luna* event. European French currently favor "*danse d'auteur*" with its literary metaphor, a term transposed from the *auteur* movement in cinema (Bentivoglio, 1989), when discussing inventive, innovative forms of contemporary dance. They speak of "*une écriture de danse*" (literally meaning "dance writing") to indicate

choreographic style (Bentivoglio, 1989, p. 16). The *auteur* concept is not as yet common in the Montréal dance world, although I recently observed it coming into use in the course descriptions of the Dance Department at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*. As for “postmodern dance,” commonly heard in the United States, Montréal dancers rarely use the term at all. When I have asked why, they respond that they think of it as the kind of contemporary dancing that Americans, not Montréalers, are doing. There is an almost complete absence of this term in Québécois dance writing (for instance Albert, 1987; Barras, 1995; Époque, 1999; Tembeck, 1991). The descriptors “experimental” and “avant-garde” are problematic, because they might serve to describe an attitude towards art-making that could apply to any genre of dance at any time, from sport dancing to ice dancing, and so not the sole province of contemporary dancers. “Concert” dance has been a term rarely heard in Québec where it is more commonly associated with music performances. Dance historians Selma Jean Cohen (1974) and Lincoln Kirstein (1935) wrote about “theatrical dance” in referring to classical ballet and its modernist descendants. I didn’t employ “theatrical” because in today’s post-colonial dance world “theatrical dance” could refer to any professionally staged dance, including circus choreography, stage-adaptations of folk dances, musical theatre routines, and the dancing that accompanies popular music concerts and video-clips. Folk dance scholar Nahachewsky (1995) uses “presentational dance” when speaking of dances that are staged for spectators, and so not those that are participatory, a concept to which I occasionally refer in the course of this study.

It is also true that some Montréalers use the term *danse-théâtre* (theatrical dance in English) when discussing certain local and international strains of contemporary choreography. But not all choreographers fall into that interdisciplinary orientation. In her definitive thesis and book on the subject, Montréal dance researcher Febvre (1995) analyzed and defined this hyphenated genre since its resurgence in the 1970s as German *Tanztheater*.

Her exploration of the genre has convinced me that dance theater is both too specific and too generalized a term to use here, unless by a particular choreographer to describe their own work.

#### 1.3.4 The dance event

The meta-conceptual framework for this study is the notion of the “dance event” in the sense developed by certain dance anthropologists and ethnologists, further elaborated in the next chapter. Montréal dance impresarios also use the term dance event, but when they do they are usually referring to those dance presentations with a particularly high profile, budget and public impact, such as an international festival.

My own understanding of the concept was honed gradually throughout the process of the literature review, and especially from some of the seminal writing of dance anthropologists as they worked on creating definitions (see section 2.3). The framework developed here for a contemporary dance event posits wide and inclusive boundaries in consideration of the nature (who, what, where, when) and the function (why) that was informed by cultural context and insider’s accounts.

As for who dance and what happened, the *Luna* event was understood as an extra-ordinary social occasion that encompassed all of the participants and goings on contributing in any way, whether part of the core public performances or in an indirect capacity. For instance, *Luna*’s activities included: imagining the choreography, planning and administration, marketing, creative and technical processes, documentation, teaching, mounting and performing *Luna*, writing and discussing the performance, and more. In this view, participants then were not only those who danced and watched the dancing, but all who contributed in any way and according to their roles in the event. Spatial parameters followed the dance company

from their home office and studios to the many theaters on several continents where they staged and restaged the event for local audiences. The temporal boundaries of the event were not as clear. Although I finally located a beginning point, or “day one,” of the event as the moment when choreographer Laurin began to imagine the *Luna* concept, I was unable to locate a definitive ending point. From previous knowledge of many dance events similar to *Luna*, there would likely be an aftermath in the memory and writings of participants and perhaps (based on Laurin’s philosophy of extending the life of her creations) a future reconstruction of the work. And while taking into account an imagined aftermath beyond performances of *Luna*, I chose an arbitrary “final day” for the ethnography: the last official performance. In determining the function of this kind of dance event, I chose to focus on both the moment of performance itself and all participants’ points of view, and to also consider the entire enterprise of dance event-making in terms of its meaning within participants’ life process.

#### 1.4 Organization of the dissertation

The document is divided into three main sections: (a) introductory matter concerning motives, definitions, dissertation organization, methods and methodologies, and a review of the theoretical literature; (b) descriptive and interpretive accounts of *Luna*’s activities, participants, time and space parameters; and (c) interpretations and analysis of *Luna*’s meanings in two senses, in the lives of participants and choreographic interpretations made at the moment of performance. A discussion of the outcome of the research process serves as a concluding chapter.

#### 1.4.1 Part I: Introduction, theory and methodology

Following this introductory chapter in which objectives, motivations, questions and definitions are clarified, Chapter II assesses past and recent theoretical writing that gave ground to this study. They are grouped together into seven categories: (a) dance anthropology; (b) the dance event framework; (c) cross-disciplinary scholarship in dance and anthropology; (d) the cultural studies of dance; (e) reception theory, aesthetic philosophy, movement analysis and “sensual scholars”; (f) Québécois dance writers and researchers; and (g) sociological studies on artists and audiences. Ideas and theories from these texts are critically reviewed and their pertinence to the processes of interpreting, analyzing and theorizing the *Luna* dance event is explored.

Chapter III discusses the methodologies and methods employed in creating this study and which guided the ethnographic processes. It begins with a consideration of the research problem, its origin and particularities. Two issues are then raised in terms of their application to this project: post-positivist research design and questions of language (bilingualism). Parameters of the research question and design are delineated and then the ethnographic methods employed are described: fieldwork, gathering and transcribing data, coding and interpreting the data both by hand and through the aid of a computer program. And finally, I identify and discuss four validity criteria specific to this study and which serve to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of this study.

#### 1.4.2 Part 2: A descriptive story of the *Luna* dance event

The second section creates a detailed story of the participants and activities of the *Luna* event. Beginning with Chapter IV, a chronology of the



activities of the *Luna* event is listed, and then divided into thematic sections for further discussion: choreographic instigation, initial planning, creative processes, the choreographic composition, management, documentation, teaching, presentation, touring, the last dance and aftermath. The dance and dancing itself is also described in a section on choreography, in which *Luna's* structure and content, the dancers' stage persona, the movements, costumes, sound, and light and visual imagery are brought to life. In Chapter V, various aspects of the social identities, dance-related backgrounds, and dance event roles of various participant groups and individuals, are culled mainly from the in-depth interviews. Professional participants' lives in the dance world are briefly portrayed in capsule biographies along with supplementary topics of interest (e.g. dancers' bodies, the *métier* of dancing, etc.). Also, selected demographic characteristics of all participants in the study are charted and discussed. As for where and when the event took place, the element of space is discussed in Chapter VI as the places and settings in which the event unfolded, and time as a multi-faceted phenomenon that is understood as *Luna's* era, day-to-day scheduling, and the experience of everyday vs. theatrical time.

#### 1.4.3 Part 3: Meanings of the *Luna* event for participants

Chapter VII tells how it was that participation in the *Luna* event held meaning in the lives of individual artists, event personnel, and dance specialists. Six general genres of life meanings are distinguished and each one briefly characterized. And then the motives that brought audience members to attend *Luna* are organized into five categories of meaning with their corresponding views about dance and discussed. Chapter VIII looks closely at the moment of the *Luna* performances, and the meaning-making processes of those participants who were present. More specifically, the kinds of



interpretations, evaluations and critiques that were made by the artists, personnel, spectators and specialists are examined. The impact of various participant groups on the form, content and meaning of *Luna* is charted and considered.

Following the third section, a final chapter concludes with a meta-narrative about the outcome of the research project. It includes a synthesis of the form and function of the *Luna* event, and a discussion of its impact on my practice as a dance presenter with implications for the field of contemporary dance and for further research in contemporary dance ethnography. An epilogue was formulated in the light of the choreographic project that followed *Luna*, when company dancers looked back on the previous experience in contrast with the new one.

## 1.5 Conclusion

These introductory explanations have laid preliminary ground and context for the study and story still to come. This initial chapter has charted four strata of this foundation: (a) the evolution of the research question, (b) insights into the study's underlying assumptions, (c) revelation of the researcher's frame of reference, and (d) working definitions of basic concepts. This case study of the *Luna* event has been situated in time and place as a unique phenomenon among other dance events in Montréal, and its time and space boundaries have been clearly drawn.

By transposing the anthropologists' dance event framework into the realm of contemporary artistic dance studies, a holistic and I believe particularly inclusive event concept has been conceived. Finally, the research question that began as an urgent personal and anthropological one of "why dance," has given rise to the structure of an elaborate ethnographic story of the nature and meaning of a contemporary dance event.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL GROUNDING FOR AN ETHNOGRAPHIC UNDERSTANDING OF *LUNA*

This thesis inhabits the cross-disciplinary region between the study of dance as art form and dance anthropology. Contemporary dance researchers who cross the disciplinary divide into the field of anthropology are still scant. But the body of literature on dance anthropology and dance-focused ethnographies has been proliferating since the 1970s, and is especially fecund at the moment of this writing.

Researchers in the adjacent fields of arts sociology, aesthetics, as well as critical and cultural studies of dance, have also been producing copious bodies of literature that provided fertile grounds for this contemporary dance ethnography. After sifting through a multitude of texts for over two years, I honed in on a group of authors from whom I extracted particular definitions, models or theories on which to base my research methodology, fieldwork and data interpretation. This review of the literature discusses these authors' contributions to the *Luna* project on three levels: (a) how I have interpreted and applied their ideas to this study (b) the way in which I take issue with, or propose an expansion of, their intellectual proposals, and (c) the way in which this study might be seen as a continuation of their projects.

The first anthology of dance fieldwork techniques was edited in 1999, by Theresa Buckland, in a timely fashion to be of use to this research project. With sixteen new essays from as many authors, researchers explored various aspects of theory, methods and issues in dance ethnography, several of which

are discussed below. But as mentioned in the introductory chapter, I have only been able to locate three published book-length ethnographies about Western art dance practices, from Wulff (1998), Novack (1990) and Fisher (2003) on which to build my own. In the course of the research process, I have also discovered the largely unpublished work of other artist-researchers around the world who like myself have only begun to apply anthropological methods and methodologies to the study of their own contemporary dance communities (e.g. Huang, 1996; Santos, 1999; Suarez, 2005).

My readings also led me through a dense tangle of erudite, interdisciplinary debates and discourses linking the disciplines of aesthetic philosophy, art criticism, dance anthropology, sociology, dance analysis, dance history and the newest areas of critical dance studies and the cultural studies of dance. I even ventured into fields of thought about phenomena such as "tourist art" and the semiotics of expressive movement, eventually set aside because in the end they seemed peripheral to the concerns in this study. These interdisciplinary discourses were in turbulent motion at the time of the research project, and sorting through them to capture ideas in flux has been challenging and sometimes elusive. Theoretical grounding for this study and frameworks for analysis of the data were in the end assembled from ideas gathered in several of these fields.

This review of the literature begins on a historical note by locating theoretical propositions from founding mothers (and a few fathers) who contributed to shaping the field of dance anthropology within three distinct cultural contexts and perspectives. The following section fleshes out some of the dynamics of doing anthropology at home. Next, the focus will hone in on certain arts-interested anthropologists and sociologists who have contributed to theorizing the concept of the "dance event" and to analyzing the workings of the Western art world. Then I examine in more detail texts that are located at the crossroads of art and anthropology, re-examining the Western academic tradition of keeping them separate. Next, the burgeoning field of

critical and cultural dance studies will be looked at for its impact on this research project. In the following section, a diverse set of dancing and non-dancing aesthetic philosophers and analysts of various kinds, who turned their attention to issues of dance, are singled out for the intellectual direction and clarity they provided at specific points in this research process. And finally, I scan a selection of local writing on for its contributions to my understanding of the history and social context of Québécois *nouvelle danse*<sup>1</sup>.

## 2.1 The field of dance anthropology

The discipline of dance anthropology has a relatively short history that can be seen to date back from the 1940s, according to Kurath's overview of the field (1960). But as briefly discussed in Chapter I, it already contains three distinct research communities with their own histories, theories and methodologies, situated in distinct geographic locations: the American dance ethnologists, British social anthropologists of dance and Eastern European ethnochoreologists.

Just as I am entering the field it seems to be coming into maturity, replete with historical accounts and surveys of the discipline (e.g. Kaeppler, 1978; Lange, 1980; Snyder, 1992). A venerable group of academic elders in the mid-1900s gave status to the discipline as a serious field of study and provided its early theoretical underpinnings and continue to develop the field (Franziska Boas, 1944; Giurchescu [on Brailoiu], 2000; Grau [on Blacking], 1993; Hanna, 1979; Kurath, 1960; Kealiinohomoku, 1976; Lange, 1975; Royce, 1977; Spencer, 1985; Williams, 1976).

My initial point of entry into dance anthropology, as recounted in the previous chapter, was by way of Kealiinohomoku's classic essay (1969/1970).

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<sup>1</sup> I decided not to widen the scope to include international authors with the exception of newspaper critics because the literature is vast and easily the subject of future study on Montréal dance.

And her dissertation outlined a theory and methods for dance anthropology (Kealiinohomoku, 1976) that I have put to use at numerous points in the research process as a source for working definitions of culture, anthropology, and dance events. Her thesis also offered strategies for the organization of field observation, data analysis and the structure of the final text. It was also in this thesis (1976) that Kealiinohomoku proposed the notion of dance having a useful function in all societies that underlies this thesis: "The fact that dance is found in every society but has no common cultural rationale for its existence [...] makes it seem logical to infer some imperative that causes dance to appear in all human societies" (p. 44). From long years of struggle for economic survival and social recognition for contemporary choreographers, I had finally come to accept that our practice held as yet little interest and meaning for the larger community.

Although this study of a Montréal dance event is rooted principally in the views of North American dance ethnologists, insights and theoretical ideas have also been gleaned from the British and Eastern European schools of thought. My sources for this study included texts from each of the three groups of dance anthropologists discussed in the previous chapter. I have come to distinguish their distinct orientations in this way: (a) the dance is seen as a microcosm for understanding social organization among American dance ethnologists (e.g. Browning, 1995; Novack, 1990; Savigliano, 1995; and Taylor, 1998); (b) the British dance anthropologists consider dance as a small but vital branch of the larger discipline of social anthropology, with their focus on the semiology of movement (e.g. Blacking, 1980; Brinson, 1985; Kaeppler, 1978; Lange, 1975; Spencer, 1985); and finally (c) the Eastern European ethnochoreologists engage in a state-sponsored quest to document, preserve, and theorize their national dance heritages (e.g. Giurchescu, 1999; Nahachewsky, 1997). British dance theorist Williams (1991) has further argued for an even broader field she calls "human movement studies" and for which she developed "semasiology," a theory "intended to

move dance studies [towards] an understanding of human beings as meaning-makers" (in Frosch, 1999, p. 255). The belief among many of the *Luna* participants that contemporary dance is a form of meaning-making, and the kinds of meaning that they articulated, is explored in Chapters VII and IX.

These three groups of dance anthropologists are actually intermingling with increasing frequency within each other's conferences and symposiums<sup>2</sup> and books, giving rise to cross-purposes and shared methodologies. Buckland's anthology (1999a), for instance, created a forum inclusive of all three groups of dance anthropologists.

## 2.2 Doing anthropology at home

It was by way of the proceedings for a conference of the British Association of Social Anthropologists in 1988 that I unearthed discussion in the discipline towards a recent tendency for doing "anthropology at home." From this collection of research papers (Jackson, 1988) I became aware of a debate about economic and philosophical motives that had resulted in a shift in the attention of a noteworthy group of younger anthropologists away from exotic lands and back to their own communities (as with the Chicago school sociologists before them). But there was no mention at all in these texts of arts practices, pointing to the rarity of studies like this one. Previously unforeseen subjects emerged at that conference such as: (a) how the discipline had been changed by indigenous ethnographers' work and (b) problems that were specific to doing research at home. With this conference in mind, I now understood the *Luna* project to be part of a theoretical movement within the anthropology field itself, but a movement with as yet few contribution by arts anthropologists. Novack's ethnohistory of Contact Improvisation (1990) provided me with a first model of contemporary dance

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<sup>2</sup>Two examples are annual meetings of the Congress on Research in Dance in the U.S. and the Dance Ethnochoreology Study Group of the International Council on Traditional Music based in Europe.



ethnography from which I could begin arguing for the pertinence of a Western art dancer doing ethnography at home.

But it was in Buckland's anthology (1999a), published more than a decade later, that I discovered Giurchescu's reflections (1999) about her predicament in Eastern Europe as a dance ethnographer who was native to the dance form she was studying and yet outsider to the social context in which she was working. She wrote about the advantages and handicaps of working in one's own culture as, for instance, the ethnographer's sense of familiarity with the larger social contexts that can lead to overlooking obvious but important details (p. 45). I have found myself in a similar predicament as an insider to the contemporary dance world in general, and yet sometimes excluded as an outsider by some of the power elite of Montréal *nouvelle danse*. And the expressionistic (emotional) temperament of much (but not all) Québécois choreography, even after the 28 years of my residency, still feels foreign to the American body-based formalism and somatic aesthetics I had known from my formative years as a dancer. Giurchescu's text also alerted me to the political predicament of my ambiguous status as both a local dance presenter and fieldworker, and how these dual roles became blurred in relationships with participants. After leaving the field, like Giurchescu, I have inevitably continued to encounter and interact with the protagonists in this study.

I also gained insight on my predicament as insider in the field from an Swiss-born dance anthropologist Grau (1999), in her essay on the dynamics of power in fieldwork and in particular the problems of access and representation in the field. She also called attention to the difficulties in the interpersonal relationships between fieldworker and those who are observed. For instance, she examined the politics of fund-raising and distribution of resources in the pre-fieldwork stage, the tendency to discard



one's own cherished principles in the field, and questions of ownership in the writing-up period afterwards (pp. 169-170). Grau portrayed a perplexing maze of political interactions, many of which I did in fact experience as I sought status and funding as a graduate student, and grappled with my own power-laden position as the director of a dance performance space within the same dance community I was studying. In the end, there were times during the process of the *Luna* study when, for better or for worse, my particular status gave me access to offices and meetings that might otherwise have proved difficult, and other times it oriented the quality of my exchanges with participants. But as a novice doctoral student and ethnographer I felt more like the hopeful (and less powerful) initiate seeking mentorship from more knowledgeable scholars, a role that admittedly gave me a time for recuperation from the responsibilities of my day-to-day work in the dance world.

### 2.3 Conceiving the dance event framework

The notion of a contemporary dance event has been central to this research project. In this section I examine the contributions to this concept found in the writings of dance ethnologists and ethnochoreologists Kealiinohomoku (1976), Ronström (1988 and 2000), Royce (1977), Snyder (1988 and 1992) and Nahachewsky (1995), and also sociologists Becker (1982) and Goffman (1974).

From the mid-1970s to mid-1980s, while the discipline of dance anthropology was still nascent, researchers embraced a wide array of theoretical models about the nature and function of dancing. Among these, they proposed that (a) dance is a form of human communication (Hanna, 1979); (b) dance is a social or spiritual function of society (Lange, 1975), (c) dance is a kind of "cultural performance" (Schechner, 1977), (d) dance is a

structured system of expressive human movement (Kaeppler, 1985), (e) dance is a societal safety valve (the catharsis theory) and instrument for social solidarity (Spencer, 1985); and (f) the related idea that dance can be a social regulator or agent of change (Brinson, 1985).

Anya Peterson Royce published *The Anthropology of Dance* in 1977, an early book-length discussion of the discipline. In it she raised the question of how to contend with these differing conceptions of the meaning of dance, which she suggested might be the result of focusing too narrowly on the dance performance itself. She proposed the "dance event unit" as a response to this splintering of dance views:

[...] part of our difficulty in coming to terms with definitions is our tendency to separate the form of dance from its context, and [...] to use form as the primary basis for definitions. We can resolve much of the difficulty by thinking in terms of *dance events* [...] rather than of dances and dancing [...] taking whole events as units of analysis [...] (Royce, 1977, p. 10)

I understood her here to mean that when dances are considered holistically and as a product of their social and cultural environment, their nature and meaning become a question of indigenous significance. Throughout her book Royce uses "the dance event unit" as a foundation for analysis of particular dance forms, providing in-depth examples from her own and other's fieldwork. As for the difficulty of distinguishing the boundaries of the dance event that separate it from the general flow of social life and from other forms of expressive movement, she invoked once again the necessity of seeking out those indigenous ideas which define the time, space and dynamics of the dance event and are relevant to the dances and societies in question (Royce, 1977, p. 12).

Only one year earlier, the dance event concept was elaborated more fully by Kealiinohomoku (1976). Like Royce, her ideas were based on the need to determine the participant's viewpoints. But she went further in developing a dance event model and rationale. At first she transposed ideas from the adjacent field of folklore studies and, in particular, discussions about the storytelling event. In her thesis she lays out a general proposal for the structure and range of elements of a dance event, as well as an approach to its study. She argues, among other things, that an adequate analysis of the dance event requires answers to at least the questions of who (concept), what (phenomenon), when (time), where (space), and why (function). Although these journalistic questions are reductive indications of complex phenomena, they served the *Luna* study as a template for field observations, data analysis, and the organization chapters for this ethnography: Who were the various kinds of participants? What kinds of activities were they engaged in? When did these activities occur and what is their duration and sequence? Where did they take place, in what spaces and environments? Why did participants engage in them and what did they mean to those who did?

Kealiinohomoku (1976) also distinguished the nature and role of three groups of participants integral to the event: (a) the various non-dancing participants; (b) the dancer assigned to executing the dance itself; and (c) the dance maker (pp. 237-289). Because of the crucial emphasis on the concept of professionalism in the Montréal dance world, I also found it particularly useful to distinguish the vocational dance event participants, like the dancers and dance company personnel, from those who were not dance professionals such as spectators and employees. As evidence that dance is indeed a social activity in which many kinds of non-dancing participants also play a crucial role, she contended that participating non-dancers appear in every dance culture, that few dancers dance except at social events (there being only exceptional instances of private dancing), and that dancers thrive on responses from their peers and other viewers in order to maintain self-

concept and ongoing status (pp. 230-240). These proposals about dance event participants convinced me of the critical importance of including not only the audience, but other genres of non-dancing participants as well (funding agent, technical director, dance historian, etc.) in order to tell the story of *Luna* in its full complexity.

Also in the 1970s, an apparently fertile period for dance anthropology, Snyder (1989; 1992) elaborated a diagram of dance event "levels" (see Plate 2.1) which she had originally developed in response to the "overwhelming [...] idea of contextualization" for her students in the fledgling Dance Ethnology program at the University of California at Los Angeles. In her schema, the event is seen as a time and space experience, motivated by the intangible variable of energy (p.1). As visually represented in Plate 2.1, Snyder's levels diagram distinguished eight concepts progressing from the widest macro level (world view at the top) to the minutest micro level (the smallest unit of movement towards the bottom). She explained the concept of "level" as a "slice of space." Each of the first seven levels proposed a specific application of time and space and an explanation of its general function within the event. Level 8 was added later to the initial grid (1989), introducing a "fusion of time and space" (1992, p. 9). Each level was seen as a unit of analysis, a system unto itself, and viewed the dance in relationship to both the culture and the individual dancer. The event was displayed here as the core moment when the dance was performed. Structural elements included in the diagram were the event's performance, the dancers who performed and the movements of the dancing.

STRUCTURE	GENERAL FUNCTION
<b>Event pattern 1—world view event</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• description of maximum ritual <i>time</i> structure: units in year or years</li> <li>• description of maximum ritual <i>space</i> structure: defines total culturally defined spatial parameters</li> </ul>	conceptualizes experientially culture's world view
<b>Event pattern 2—festival, ritual, performance event</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• charting of total <i>time</i> of festival, ritual, performance-units in days</li> <li>• charting of total <i>space</i> of festival, ritual, performance</li> </ul>	cope with "question mark" situations within culture
<b>Event pattern 3—dance event outside view</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identification of <i>time</i> of dance events within structure of pattern 2</li> <li>• identification of <i>space</i> of dance events within structure of pattern 2</li> </ul>	socially identifies and defines group
<b>Event pattern 4—dance event inside view</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identification and charting of personal <i>time</i> (social dynamic) for dance event</li> <li>• identification and charting of personal <i>space</i> (floor plan) for dance event</li> </ul>	socially identifies and defines role
<b>Event pattern 5—"dance symbol"</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• viewing of each socially identifiable person in dance in terms of <i>time</i>, for example movement motifs</li> <li>• viewing of each socially identifiable person in dance <i>spatially</i>, for example costume, paraphernalia</li> </ul>	symbolically encodes essential elements of culture
<b>Event pattern 6—movement event</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• description of <i>time</i> effects of movement of individual dancers</li> <li>• description of <i>spatial</i> effects of movement of individual dancers</li> </ul>	conveys kinesthetic experience
<b>Event pattern 7—kinemic event</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identification of smallest unit of movement in <i>space</i> understood within a culture</li> <li>• identification of smallest unit of movement in <i>time</i> understood within a culture</li> </ul>	identifies paralinguistic roots
<b>Event pattern 8—energy event</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fusion of time and space in a dynamic whole</li> </ul>	transforms root experience

Figure 2. Levels of event patterns—defined in terms of time and space

Plate 2.1 Allegra Fuller Snyder's "Level of event patterns" diagram (1992, p. 9). Reproduced with permission from the author.

Snyder explained that her “levels paper” emerged from the need to consolidate the multiple concepts of the dance event in circulation during that formative period of theoretical development:

In this paper I spoke of the need to be both comprehensive and aware of a number of levels of attention or focus, moving from a “Geertzian” attention to world view to Kaeppler’s kinemic attention. [...] Each level of event was framed by time/space factors and described diagrammatically as well as verbally, making it a concrete rather than abstract concept. The total concept was demonstrated through a full display of macro-micro patternings. This approach allowed for maintenance of a holistic awareness of our objectives while acknowledging that many levels of approach were acceptable and possible. All did not have to be included in any one study if the whole remained in focus. (Snyder, 1992, p. 10)

It was her notion of attending to various distinct levels, micro-and-macro patternings, that informed my fieldwork, interviews and data coding of the *Luna* event. The data for the *Luna* did yield material that was incorporated into the final document and that referred to specific aspects of Snyder’s levels: (a) at level 2, Chapter VI is an examination of the time and space of the overall performance event; (b) at level 4, in Chapter V there is a detailed account of the personal identity and event-specific role of the dancers; (c) at levels 5 and 6, in the course of Chapter IV section 4.5, but also in Chapter 8 section 8.3 there are accounts of the dancers’ kinesthetic experience and social understanding of the movement. But the *Luna* study proposed an enlargement Snyder’s diagram by: (a) including activities of preparation and aftermath, (b) embracing the postpositivist perspective of multiple world views and perspectives on time, space, and meaning, and (c) including a large



range of participants beyond only the dancers themselves. Furthermore, this research project reshapes Snyder's ideas to suit the study of professional artistic dance, one whose functions and meanings are not the subject of consensus, but whose meanings are interpreted differently by various event participants.

In 1995 folklore specialist Nahachewsky proposed a typology of four dance genres that challenged the traditional historical categories of dance (ballet, jazz, modern, folk, etc.). His regrouping was of particular use in view of the dance event concept because it turned attention to the purposes of the dancer and for whom he or she was dancing. His four categories were: (a) presentational dance for an external audience, (b) participatory dance in which dancers paid attention to each other, (c) reflexive dance with attention paid to one's own kinesthetic experience and (d) sacred dance with a "message intended for supernatural beings" (p. 4). This typology was particularly useful in distinguishing *Luna's* theatrical kind of dancing from other kinds of dancing in Montréal, and in terms of the research question of why and for whom *Luna* dancers dance. In Nahachewsky's view, the *Luna* dance event would be classified principally as a presentational one because it was performed on "formal stages and in other locations where the physical and cultural distance between performers and external human audiences was greater than between the participants of participatory dances" (p. 1). *Luna* was clearly not a participatory event because everyone was not "up on their feet" and dancing together, at least not during the public performance itself, as did Montréalers at social and folk dance gatherings for example. But it might also be possible to argue that on certain occasions during the *Luna* event, there were incidents of private reflexive dancing (e.g. when dancers were engaged in a personal movement routine) and even the spiritual sacred genre (I am thinking here for instance of dancer Rodrigue's narrative about why she dances from I-MR).

Several sociologists also proposed instructive concepts that have proven useful to in guiding finding parameters for the study, field observation, data analysis, and to help structure the coding and interpretative processes as well as the write-up of the final document. The first is Erving Goffman, who in *Frame Analysis* (1974) elaborated his theory about "frames" which he explained as "the principles of organization which govern events -- at least social ones -- and our subjective involvement in them (p. 10)." His ideas were strongly influenced by the theory of symbolic interactionism, in turn rooted in the American philosophy of pragmatism. In the course of my readings, I soon realized that these philosophical beliefs were especially resonant with my own world view. Filmer, Jenks, Seale and Walsh (1998) explained pragmatism as the belief that human behavior is based on a problem-solving adaptation through conscious understanding of the symbolic universe of the social environment (p. 29). In a similar vein, symbolic interactionists argued that social behavior is a matter of human beings interacting and forming social relationships. They did this by communicating through shared symbols that allow them to understand and give meaning to one another's gestures and responses. Updated perspectives on the theory of symbolic interactionism have recently been elaborated in a book length study by Robert Prus (1996) in which he sets this theory in opposition to "both the postivist/structuralist tradition and the postmodernist/ postructuralist umbrella" (p. 2-4). In Prus' view, human behavior and lived experience are interpretive, interactive processes based on a community's acquisition of a common language and collective world view. These "human life-worlds," as he called them, are then to be studied through the researcher's interaction with the very people involved in the production of these behaviors and activities (p 11). It is this dialogic world view that motivated my choice of ethnography in the first place, in which interaction the subjects under scrutiny (albeit sometimes discrete when in the role of participant observer) is at the heart of the matter.

In *Frame Analysis* (1974) Goffman proposed, and I concur, that it is certain principles of organization composing a particular framework which in turn allowed participants to give meaning to events. He characterized these participants (he called them “doers” and “doers”) as intelligent, live agencies who are subjected to standards and social appraisal (pp. 22-24).

Goffman wrote about a “theatrical frame,” in *Frame Analysis* (1974, p. 124-155) in which he identified certain conventions of the Western stage and the interactions between the “figures that people it” (p. 124). Although his analysis referred to the staging of text-based theatrical events with actors, much of his theatrical framework is pertinent to this study of Montréal *nouvelle danse*. For instance, Goffman characterized theatrical performances as a set of conventional agreements that are enacted between audiences and performers:

A performance, in the restricted sense in which I shall now use the term, is that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense, and looked to for engaging behavior, by persons in an ‘audience’ role. (Goffman, 1974, p. 124)

To Goffman's mind, this transformation of actors into stage characters is “some sort of voluntarily supported benign fabrication through which the audience becomes collaborators in unreality” (p. 136). Contemporary dance performances like those of *Luna* also depend on this kind of agreement between performers and audience to suspend reality and enter into a realm of make-believe. In the case of dancers, this transformation appears to give license to a display of extra-ordinary physical movements that would unlikely be seen under ordinary circumstances, the choreography. What these choreographic movements mean precisely is agreed to be a matter of

individual interpretation, as seen in Chapter VIII of this study. Goffman's articulation of the theatrical framework, even though he hadn't described the particularities of a dance performance, strongly tempered my descriptions of *Luna's* dance activities and especially the account of the moment of presentation for a public audience. But I have widened his theatrical frame to include the conventions guiding a wider range of participant behaviors, e.g. the goings on backstage and in the lobby, and during creative processes.

Goffman (1984) also made several distinctions about the theatrical framework that I have put to work during fieldwork and analysis. Among them are the differences between the conventions of real life vs. stage performance, the staging area and audience region, audiences and onlookers, and various responses and relationships between performers and audiences. But he limited his analysis to the moment of performance, and to the artistic form of text-based theater. With *Luna*, I needed to take his propositions further by transposing them to the specificity of contemporary dance, with its non-verbal movement behaviors and tendency towards artistic abstraction.

I introduce a text by ethnomusicologist Owe Ronström at this juncture because dance event analysis is a direct descendant of Goffman's frame theory. In "The Dance Event: Methodological and Terminological Discussion of the Concept" (1988) Ronström recalled that the term "event" was derived from the Latin "evenire," meaning to happen (p. 22). He suggested that there was a processual aspect in which something would happen and was anticipated provided a set of basic features for what he terms "a dance evening." He then described it as: (a) a special kind of social occasion; (b) extra-ordinary; (c) limited in time and space; and (d) one in which there is a joint cognitive, visual and kinetic focus (p. 23). I would add that the senses of touch and hearing may also be manifest as a focus of certain dance evenings, and point out that the *Luna* study's framework extends beyond the performance itself to include the preparation and aftermath of the event. Although Ronström (1989) had in mind a Yugoslav folk dance and music

performance when he wrote his research paper, several ideas he introduced have contributed to building my own concept of the *Luna* event. For instance, I formulated the idea that all of the dance events' activities were organized around a common focus, which I designated as "Laurin's choreographic project." Ronström also proposed that the activities of a dance event might be put into a hierarchy, from those that are more or less important to the project, and more or less focused or informal in their organization. During the creative sessions for *Luna*, for example, there were "common doings" each day, some of which were at the center of the creative process, such as choreographic creative sessions in which movement was created and shaped, and informal "time out" activities like stretching, showering, and coffee break chit-chat. In the same vein, during public performance, Ronström differentiates "innermost doings at the center of everyone's attention" from "peripheral doings" (pp. 24-5). At the *Luna* performances, for instance, I considered as innermost doings the dancing, spectating and technical support work. The peripheral doings (those that took place without calling attention to themselves) were then behaviors like spectators conversing informally as they waited, ticket selling, and the dancers' recuperation during their offstage breaks. And yet another of his concepts applied to this study was that of the "expressive specialist" (p. 26) or those who applied their expert knowledge in defining, interpreting and evaluating the dance event for all participants. I eventually determined that in the case of *Luna*, the category of expressive specialist would include its dance presenters, dance writers and researchers, jury members and funding agents.

Another determining influence in the development of the *Luna* dance event concept were the writings of sociologist Howard Becker, introduced to me through the introduction and first chapter of *Art Worlds* (1982). Becker used the term "artworld" to denote "the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional



means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that the art world is noted for" (p. x). His stated intention was to shift the center of attention away from the artist and the artwork (the dominant view of his day in the sociology of art) to towards the network of cooperation engaged in producing an artwork (p. xi). In a similar spirit, this study describes the network of participants who acted cooperatively to make manifest the *Luna* event. Becker's lucid descriptions of the functioning of art worlds led me to consider a much wider range of participants as stakeholders in *Luna* than I would have previously. As for the question of meaning in dance events, Becker proposed that artworks (and the events in which they are displayed) bear the signs of the cooperative network engaged in their making. It was this notion of Becker that led to the conceptualization of the schematic representation in Figure 9.1, in which various participants groups are seen in terms of their role and impact on the *Luna* choreography, performance and event.

So many of Becker's contentions in *Artworlds* (1982) about how art is produced and evaluated have resonated with my findings about *Luna*. Many of his distinctions and explanations about participant roles have been put to use in this study (e.g. dance-goers, personnel, funding agents). He might have been describing the Montréal contemporary dance world when he observed a prominent current of thought (not shared by all) that art-making requires special gifts that few have, and that those known as gifted are given special rights and privileges for which society is rewarded with works of great importance. He goes on to say that society has mechanisms to sort out artists from non-artists, which led me to include in this study the criteria by which funding agencies and juries make this determination (pp. 14-17). And like Goffman, he contends that art-making is governed by conventions. Becker was later criticized by Marcus and Myers (1995, p. 2) because of his commitment to descriptive interpretation and failure to engage in the kind of cultural critique in which political ideologies are revealed and criticized. It is



true that Becker's politics don't seem aligned with the current day attention of cultural critics aiming to ferret out the political negotiations of gender, cultural identity, class and sexual preference. But Becker's political agenda is close to my own, a "politics sympathetic to [...] the underdog in society" (Filmer, Jenks, Seale and Walsh, 1998, (p. 30) or, in his own words "a congenital anti-elitism" (1982, p. ix). Also like Becker, I am less inclined towards the pressing issues of power advanced by cultural critics, but in this study have articulated an avowed empathy with the marginal status and low income of contemporary dancers in Montréal society. I am certainly hoping that this study will serve to create new kinds of awareness and knowledge about the "usefulness" of contemporary dance practices and so influence the thinking of dance policy-makers and practitioners.

#### 2.4 Anthropologists and arts researchers getting acquainted

Until recently there has been limited dialogue between Western dance researchers and dance anthropologists. This division is particularly striking in light of the fact that many of these dance-focused anthropologists have trained in the art dance techniques of their own cultures, and to my knowledge are often ardent spectators of artistic dance performances in their home cities and towns. So why haven't they chosen these kinds of dances as subjects for their ethnographic research? Marcus and Myers (1995) suggested that one answer lies in anthropologists' "long-held sympathy for outsiders, for cultural relativism and for life as lived" that has resulted in an "academic division of labor between the study of 'primitive' small-scale societies and complex contemporary Western ones, [and so] the enterprise of studying artistic practices was left to art historians, sociologists and 'cultural critics' " (p. 8).

On the other hand, Western dance artists have long been fascinated by far-away cultures, but unlike ethnographers their engagement has for the most part been limited to an interest in those aspects of culture that might serve as “material” for their art-making<sup>3</sup>. Western dance historians and critics for the most part have chosen to depict art dance through analysis of the choreography itself and historical studies of choreographers' lives and work, leaving the psycho-sociological terrain of audience response (perception theory) to theatrical and literary critics (see Bennett, 1997). By and large, dance scholars have rarely until recently adopted the ethnographic methods of anthropologists of doing long-term fieldwork as a participant observer in the natural settings of their subjects of study, seeking out the “native viewpoint.” There are of course exceptions, notably the dance education research of Fortin (1994) and Green in the early '90s. Bearing witness to the continuing rift between arts and anthropology researchers, there are currently few university courses in dance anthropology, and fewer still dance anthropology programs.

In this study I have strived to distinguish Montréal *nouvelle danse* as a genre as distinguished from that of other local non-art dances (folk, recreational, and social dance for instance). My personal sense of what sets this kind of artistic contemporary dance apart from the “non-art” (non-professional) dance forms in Montréal is in the process of mutation, under the influence of the theorists and participants who have filled my mind in the course of studying the *Luna* event. I share with most of them the belief that to be a professional dancer requires at special skills and training, and a vocational commitment to the practice. The multitude of testimonies in the chapter on *Luna* participants exposes various individual views on what constitutes professionalism. Among them were a few common beliefs such as passionate commitment, solid training, professional conditions for dancing,

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<sup>3</sup>I am thinking here of choreographers like American Modern Dancer Katherine Dunham (1969) who undertook ethnographic research on Haitian dance through the University of Chicago.

and integration into publicly recognized dance companies and theaters. But in the wake of this study I no longer feel that there is a clear-cut line between artistic dance and other forms such as social and folk dance. Although it seems axiomatic to say so, it is good anthropology to affirm that the *Luna* dance event can be seen as an artistic one because it is recognized as such by its participants: other artists, peer juries, funding bodies, audiences, presenters, dance writers, researchers and so on.

Marcus and Myers' landmark anthology (1995) exerted a strong influence on my perceptions of the *Luna* event, and was provocatively titled *The Traffic in Culture: Reconfiguring Art and Anthropology*. I came to see this dissertation as one such reconfiguration, but one that built a case for contemporary dance. The book was concerned mainly with issues in the visual arts, with only one essay on the performing arts, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's in-depth critical analysis (1998) of the tension between anthropological principles and the avant-garde arts programming mandate of the 1990 Los Angeles Festival. In her account, during this massive festival event, little-known traditional performance forms from around the world were featured with little or no interpretation or explanation to contemporary arts audiences. As it turns out, I was in attendance there as a delegate at the Dance Critics Conference, and witnessed the events she discusses. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett critiqued the manner in which anthropological frameworks were rejected by festival organizer Peter Sellars in favor of a particular contemporary art ethos, one that championed the benefits of the strangeness of new and unfamiliar forms (pp. 224-254). Unlike the directors of this festival, the *Luna* study embraces an anthropological perspective in order to give context to contemporary dance practices, and reveals that "strangeness and unfamiliarity" were not in fact the dominant benefits for *Luna*'s spectators (see Chapter VII, section 7.6).

In their introduction to the anthology (1995), Marcus and Meyers claimed that the traditional anthropology of art "which considers art

traditions and aesthetics cross-culturally" has in the past been either critical of Western categories of art or has used Western arts concepts in its evaluation of non-Western art (p. 4). This study of *Luna* is another attempt to bridge that divide by bringing ethnographic methods and theories to bear on contemporary Western dance events. Because doing anthropology at home, a Western artistic dancer studying her own kind, categories and concepts of researcher and dance event participants are in accord.

Marcus and Myers (1995) further faulted anthropologists for their "suspicion [...] of the commonsense category of art as an autonomous and special domain in their *own* culture." They claimed that anthropologists dismiss the category of "high art" in general, and that this might belie a discomfort with elites in general. This attitude is currently changing, as some anthropologists begin study artistic dance forms. As for artists, the problem as they saw it stems from "Kant's (1951) philosophical demarcation of [art as] an autonomous aesthetic domain of human judgment." They suggest that for many artists in the Western world art-making is in fact actually associated in a "commonsense way" with spirituality or creativity. But they claim that the Kantian view of art as a domain separate from "means-end calculations [and] moral judgment" has predominated (p. 8). In the course of the *Luna* study, this dialectic of aesthetic view among dancers will be seen as co-existing alongside yet others, such as dance-making as a form of social contribution and performance as a way to fit into society.

Many more of the ideas in Marcus and Meyers' introductory chapter bear relevance to this study, but there is one in particular that lies at the core of my research problem. After discussing some of the recent art criticism that challenges the boundaries between high art and mass culture, they pointed to an unacknowledged tension embedded in the debates which is caused by the necessary survival of the category of art despite its critiques. "Why, after all,

be an artist?" they ask. Their answer helped to spark this research project: that choosing to be an artist was indeed a question of genuine anthropological interest (p. 9).

An early example of this rift between dance anthropologists and Western art dancers can be also be found in the proceedings of the first seminar called "The function of dance in human society" (Boas, 1944). Dancer Franziska Boas, daughter of the seminal anthropologist Franz Boas, organized this (and a second consequent) gathering for anthropologists and dancers in her New York City dance studio. (Montréal choreographer Françoise Sullivan, with whom choreographer Laurin danced, was in attendance.) In her introductory notes to the proceedings Boas explained that in conceiving the seminar, "[p]rimitive and exotic cultures were turned to, because in them the dance has a *really vital function*, and its meaning is accepted by the community" (my italics) (pp. 5-6). She then called for modern dancers<sup>4</sup> (in the New York milieu of the forties) to reconsider their dance as a communal activity with a constructive social influence on the individual -- as a mental therapy, physical training and a broadening educational medium -- as did so-called "exotic" and "primitive"<sup>5</sup> peoples. She faulted modern dances for being directed exclusively towards an artistic and social elite and for fostering meanings that were not accepted by the entire community (p. 5). Boas was speaking for modern dancers in general in the period of World War II, but was clearly not accounting for those socially-minded modern dancers of that era who danced for social change and protested war and social injustice and to whom an entire conference of dance researchers in New York City was dedicated called "Of, For and By the People" (Tomko, 1993). The concept of the "primitive" in general, and in the

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<sup>4</sup> For purposes of clarity, I propose that both "modern dance" and "Modern Dance" are synonymous in this text. But I will use "modernist dance" when indicating dance of a modernist aesthetic, rather than the historical dance category of Modern Dance.

<sup>5</sup> See Kealiinohomoku (1969/70) for a discussion of these two concepts, and a challenge to the misunderstandings in the commonsense use of these terms by dance writers.



art world in particular, was later critiqued by Marcus and Myers (1995) as a "long tradition [in anthropology] of [...] a critical romance with the 'primitive' [which] historically provided a critical distance on Western practices and ethnocentrism, and alter/ native to what existed as seemingly natural and inevitable in our own societies" (p. 17).

The disciplinary divide between art and anthropology also surfaced in Buckland's anthology (1999), which discussed theory and methods in dance ethnography. In this landmark collection there is almost no mention of artistic dance forms. She personally demonstrated this bias in her introduction when writing that she hoped her book might serve as a corrective to the "dominant focus upon Western theatre art dance, with its accompanying methodologies and theoretical outlooks [which] has tended towards the exclusion of more fruitful dialogues taking place between other dance and movement specialists and dance ethnographers" (1999a, p.2). In Buckland's assessment of Wulff's study on ballet dancers (1998), she referred to Classical Ballet as "a genre which operates within highly literate and technologically oriented societies and which comes with its own tradition of scholarship and critical response [...]" (1999b, p. 10). But it is also true that ballet schools and companies have in fact been established, albeit sometimes by outsiders with colonialist attitudes, in countries with a low level of literacy and with limited access to technology.

Buckland (1999) did pose a question crucial to this research project: what *new* knowledge might be gained by applying anthropological methodologies to the understanding of contemporary art dances about which so much has already been written? This study of *Luna* seeks to demonstrate that a contextually-situated ethnography, benefiting from long-term fieldwork and a multitude of insider's viewpoints, can indeed offer a more complex portrait of the nature and function of contemporary dance than has previously been possible from more deductive outsider approaches with lesser contributions from the subjects of the study. Her question led me



to another central one in terms of my methodology: can anthropologists study these cosmopolitan art dances in the same way as they have been studying other kinds of dances societies which, as Buckland puts it, don't have a "tradition of scholarship and critical response"? My answer by way of this study is yes, because it is clear that every kind of dance can in fact be situated culturally by a researcher who desires to do so, as Kealiinohomoku (1969/1970) set out to demonstrate. As the *Luna* study illustrates, rather than impeding anthropological studies of these kinds of dances, the scholars, critics and literature of these art dances can actually be considered as part of the ethnographic artifacts and data, their particular points of view of the dance cohabiting with those of other kinds of participants.

At academic dance conferences over the last decade, I have become increasingly aware of a growing body of researchers who are in fact turning their attention to Western dance forms. The three ethnographies of Western dance forms by Fisher (2003), (Novak (1990) and Wulff (2000), discussed briefly in Chapter I, were among the first of their kind. But I have also discovered more than a dozen dance-experienced researchers from various countries and continents who have chosen to integrate anthropology's theories and methods into their thinking about their own Western artistic dance practices. These scholars are examining artistic dance practices at home, in their own dance communities. A few examples I have so far discovered are Brazilians Eluza Santos (1999) and Monica Dantas who are looking at "the Brazilian dancing body," Juanita Suarez (2005) researching the field of Chicana dance-making in the U.S., and Yin Ying Huang (1996) from Taiwan who investigates cultural identity in choreography by using the choreographer's personal histories and identities as vehicles (as she states it). Together with this study, I propose that this body of research can be seen to constitute a new current of thought within the dance research community, belonging at once to the field of dance studies and to dance anthropology.

Certain dance-specialized anthropologists have in the past included Western art dances, and in particular ballet, in their discussions about dance and culture (e.g. Brinson, 1985; Kealiinohomoku, 1976; Kurath, 1985; Lange, 1975; Royce, 1977; Spencer, 1985). Their sporadic references to Western art dancing have most often been employed to clarify definitions and boundaries of non-art and non-Western concepts of dance, and they have not undertaken fieldwork among art dancers. One of the more extended anthropological discussions of Western art dance in the period before the '90s was offered by Gertrude Kurath, a founder of American dance anthropology and mentor to Kealiinohomoku. In her 1965 essay "Dance in Modern Culture", she elucidated how form and content in modernist dance reflect specific themes and beliefs in American culture (Kurath, 1985, pp. 383-406). She sketched a portrait of this dance form from a social standpoint, asking who dances, why they dance, how they dance, and describing a range of topics drawn specifically from American culture from which it shapes its themes and aesthetics. Of more than historical interest to my study, Kurath's text suggested an attitude of attention to the social issues which she discovers both to be embedded in the modernist choreographies of which she speaks and arising from its position and aims in American society.

It wasn't until twenty-five years after Kurath's essay that her project to identify American culture through its contemporary dance was carried forward by dancer and dance researcher Cynthia Novack. Novack completed a doctoral dissertation (1990) within a university anthropology department, a study for which I was an informant. She characterized her project as an ethnohistory of the postmodern dance form Contact Improvisation, seen as a microcosm of American counter-culture of the 1960s. Eight years after Novack, Swedish researcher Wulff decided to do fieldwork among dancers in the backstage and dressing rooms of three large-scale classical ballet companies. Doing research within three ballet companies in London, New York and her home city of Stockholm, she elaborated

propositions about “transnational culture-building” in the ballet world for which latter-day communication and transportation technologies have increased mobility and created “an active and a hidden web [...] of transnational experiences and connections” (Wulff, 1998, p. 18). And finally, in 2003, Fisher completed published her research on two case studies -- the Loudon ballet company in Leesburg, Virginia and the National Ballet of Canada in Toronto, Ontario – for her socio-historical critique of the *Nutcracker*’s significance as an American “seasonal ritual.”

The ethnographies of Novak (1990) and Wulff (1998) contained distinct research problems, respectively “how does Contact Improvisation embody aspects of American alternative culture?” and “is the culture of ballet dancers a transnational one?”. As for that of Fisher (2003), a pervasive dance tradition is reviewed as a narrative of American cultural mores.

All three studies provide research models that have informed the *Luna* ethnographic undertaking, and in particular by elucidating certain motivations, advantages and difficulties of a dancer-ethnographer doing fieldwork among dancers in her home city. Like Wulff (1998), I ventured backstage and went on tour with a dance company and befriended dancers. In a similar vein to Novack (1995), I observed and interviewed the participants in my study as if a kind of socially marginalized subculture, one that forms “a community of experience” and whose boundaries are defined by common experiences (p. 15). And as did Fisher (2003), I considered the dance performance as a social event, and so interviewed not only artists and audiences, but also sought the views of production staff and others. But the framework through which I have organized this study is distinct from theirs. I did not confine my field to the “backstage life of the dancers” as tightly as did Wulff, or extend my research boundaries as widely as did Novack to encompass the historical development of an entire dance form. Nor did I, like Fisher, follow the longitudinal itinerary of a single iconic choreography in its many manifestations over decades. The time and space parameters of this

ethnography have been drawn through the notion of a single dance event in the sense of a choreographic project, envisioned by a contemporary choreographer and carried out through a cooperative network of participants. My aims were also distinct from theirs. In contrast that of Wulff, my own ethnographic study aimed to extend the usual Western frame of reference for an art dance performance (choreography, artists, audience, critics) to include the most inclusive possible range of activities and participants who contributed to the dance event in order to understand how these art dance practices and choreographies become meaningful to all manner of practitioners. Fisher's methodology, like my own, did frame the dance performance as a social event. But rather than analyzing the implications of cultural identity embedded in a choreography, I set out to discover, within the lifespan of a choreographic project, a cluster of values and practices that portray the state of international dance presentation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Montréal.

## 2.5 The field widens: dance and cultural studies

This study cannot remain indifferent to current-day intellectual movements driven largely by literary theorists (postmodernists) and certain French philosophers (poststructuralists) who have recently captivated a growing group of researchers. This surge of interest in political analysis and neo-Marxist critique of Western artistic dance from the standpoint of gender, ethnicity, sexual preference and class, is brought together in an ideologically engaged discipline currently called Dance Studies, but also the Cultural Studies of Dance and Critical Dance Studies. As Desmond (1997) recounts in an anthology for which she was editor, *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, it was in the mid-1980s that a group of dance scholars "began to respond to the wave of influential transformations that had been reconfiguring the humanities during the preceeding ten to fifteen years [...]"

and underwent a transformation under the auspices of what was generally called postmodern theory (p. 3).

As many (but not all) dance scholars embark on this postmodern journey, the range of dance and expressive movement forms receiving their attention continues to widen as they peer into formerly ignored corners of the world's dance studios and performance spaces. Questions of cultural identity and the dynamics of power are currently in the foreground. A scan of presentations at the 1999 Congress on Research in Dance, for instance, includes a feminist analysis of male ballerinas in the Ballet Trocadero, a critical assessment of eroticism in the dance sequences of Hindu cinema, and an account of cultural identity in a North American salsa dance milieu (LaPointe-Crump, 1999).

Also in her introduction to the anthology, Desmond (1997) explained the theoretical shift towards poststructuralist strategies for the interpretation of meaning as one that moved from "the search for foundations promised by structuralism to intense engagement with the conditions of production and reception" (p. 3). And American dance researcher Thomas (1995; 2003), whose project it is to lay the foundations for a sociology of dance, has also examined how "dance becomes a means of reflecting on the problems associated with the ways in which the body has been conceptualized generally in social and cultural theory [...]" (2003, p. 3). As I have come to understand it, the structuralist project to uncover an orderly meaning believed to be found deeply buried within the structure of the dance (or dance event) itself, has now shifted to a politically engaged imperative to reveal how, by and for whom dance is produced, perceived and valued. All phenomena studied are scrutinized to uncover those who are disempowered by those who dominate, and so to advocate for social change (as I remember we American students did in the 1960s). These critical scholars have also adopted a deep belief in the subjective and in the ever-changing nature of



human behavior and consciousness, and so have fostered an understanding of events that is contingent on personal, social and historical contexts.

Although this study is committed to describing and interpreting the production of a dance event within the framework of its social context, it does not venture deeply into a critical, political analysis. It is true that under the influence of cultural and critical studies of dance scholarship, I have paid particular attention to what Desmond (2000) has called the politics of knowledge, in other words how I gained access to *Luna's* sites, spoke with rather than for participants (inscribing into the text their own voices), chose my home dance community as my field, and so on. And it is true that my personal political agenda remains one of improving the social standing and economic stability of contemporary dancers and dancing in Montréal society-at-large. I am striving to do this by contributing new perspectives about the social significance of one Montréal contemporary dance event by way of this ethnography. And I intend to propagate the ideas here within and even more widely beyond the dance research community, as I have already begun to do (Davida 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b). I am hopeful that this study bears the potential to change at least local perceptions, in the wider artistic community and among the dancers themselves, of contemporary dance in Montréal as a marginal and elitist practice.

But my intentions for this study were not political in the sense of creating a central focus on the dynamics of power among dance event participants, nor are they intended as a prescription for a more just dance event practice. I have consciously tried to avoid political imperatives because it is my belief (and aren't all these theories after all but belief systems?) that the readers of this study need to be left free to interpret and employ the findings for their own purposes. I don't see my role as academic researcher, ethnographer and dance programmer, as that of the authoritative expressive specialist. I prefer to relinquish at least some of this power to the readers and dance participants themselves.



How then have postmodernist and poststructuralist thinking influenced this ethnography? Barrett (1997) distinguished eight characteristics of postmodern anthropology: (a) it poses a challenge to anthropological authority, (b) it acknowledges a complex dialogue between ethnographer and participants (a "dialogic" approach), (c) it considers ethnography as a type of writing (a literary text), (d) it focuses on procedures to interpret cultural meanings (culture functioning as if a language or text), (e) it creates an image of social life as fragmented and incomplete and a rejection of all-embracing theories (no more "grand narratives"); (f) it places an emphasis on understanding through cultural contexts ("relativism"), (g) it introduces the self-conscious presence of the ethnographer in their texts ("self-reflexivity"); and (h) it posits postmodernism as a response to a changing post-colonial world (p. 151-155). Put into these terms, I find my own ideological leanings aligned with some, but not all, these aspects of postmodernism. I have always resisted authoritarian views and explanations from any and all parties, and have long perceived the contemporary world as fragmented and in continual flux. And so in the end, I embraced the relativist position, with its fragmented narratives for which understanding requires cultural contexts. My past writing has consistently assumed a self-conscious first person point of view in which my own thoughts and beliefs were made explicit within the narrative. And my attitude throughout the interviews, and even in fieldnotes, was that of holding conversations, dialoguing with participants rather than "gathering information on them" or "asking questions to them."

But there are two aspects of Barrett's postmodern anthropology (1997) to which I haven't subscribed. First, I have not been decisively convinced by the literary metaphor in which all things are considered as if texts to be decoded, and so part of a language-like structure. Dance might resemble language in some ways (in the sense that it is a system of communication, it has an intrinsic syntax, etc.), but certainly doesn't function in the same way

(meaning of movements is less precise and concrete, etc.). And secondly, I am wary of claims by some (but certainly not all) postmodern philosophers and theorists, who hold special socio-economic status and articulate authoritative specialized discourses, to be able to provide solutions to political inequity when their ideas often never reach the ears and minds of those they intend to liberate.

## 2.6 Reception theorists, movement analysts, aesthetic philosophers and "sensual scholars"<sup>6</sup>

Several other categories of researchers contributed to this study. Their influence on this study furthers its interdisciplinary character. They come from the fields of reception (and perception) theory, movement analysis, aesthetic philosophy and from among the "sensual scholars."

It was by way of Bennett's critical account (1997) of the history of "reception theory" in the theatre world, that I became acutely conscious of the complex layers of human relationships at play during the moment of performance among performers spectators in their own realm and between them. To these layers of interaction I have added, by way of this study, the backstage technicians. Her historical study of the discipline was nourished by both theoretical texts about audience reception and sociological studies about audience attitudes. In Bennett's writing, the audience is seen and treated as a willing and active participant in the performance, a point of view that I have adopted for this ethnography. But she admits to advocacy for a socially relevant and non-elitist genre of performance, and condemned the separation between audience and performer. These are politics that I share in my personal artistic practice, but found too narrow in scope to be useful to the project of an ethnographic study of a dance event, and especially in the case of *Luna* which was often performed in opera houses.

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<sup>6</sup>This expression is borrowed from Stoller's book by the same title: *Sensuous Scholarship* (1997).

Aesthetic philosopher Sparshott published two volumes about dance philosophy (1985 and 1995), encyclopedic resources for debates about definitions. Working within the confines of Western philosophical traditions, he sought to define and explain dance phenomena in the largest sense in his first book (1985), and narrowed into a focus on theatrical performance forms of dance in the second (1995). His well-reasoned explanations provided provocative ideas to nourish my own efforts at defining the nature of *Luna* phenomena, like improvisation and choreography. But Western philosophy like Sparshott's is less concerned with cultural contexts, more committed to creating general terms of agreement and so of limited use to ethnography that must account for specific cases.

Over the course of this study I have also developed a marked affinity for the theories of aesthetic philosopher Shusterman, whose pragmatist orientation and concept of "somaesthetics" lays ground for a new branch of aesthetics that springs from bodily experiences (2000 and 2002). His discussions of pragmatist aesthetics seem to me to lie at the root of symbolic interactionism. I have integrated into this study, particularly when interpreting the ideas expressed by the specialist *Luna* participants, some of Shusterman's proposals about aesthetic perception and analysis (2002, pp. 34-52). One of these is his proposition of three distinct critical approaches to art that he calls descriptivism, prescriptivism and performativism. In each of the three, proponents assumed either a subjective stance ("this is just my own point of view") or a desire for a more objective account ("this is how it is"). The first category he called descriptivist and are those who give descriptive impressions of the art work, seek to provide the "true meaning" according to their own or artists' point of view, or then again provide an "explanatory hypothesis" about the artwork. His second prescriptivist category was reserved for those who offer decisions or recommendations about how one might regard an artwork, or they provide a single authoritative "right" method to everyone. In the third category are the performativists who

consider their interpretations in themselves a work of art ("a performance", literary in this case). In this view they contributed their own artistic creativity to the understanding of the artwork they were writing about. Shustermann's topology of critical approaches helped to discern and clarify differences among the forms of evaluation employed by *Luna* participants at the moment of public performance. And in terms of this research project itself, I have assumed both descriptivist and performativist positions with a decidedly subjectivist stance.

Aesthetic philosopher Lavender, who is also a dancer, has been grappling with answers to the on-going debate – and one of this study's central questions -- about on what terms the meaning of an art work can be determined. In one of his many essays on meaning in dance (1997), he fleshed out the position of "intentional fallscists" (and the opposing views), those aesthetics philosophers who argue that an art work stands alone after its creation and independent of the artist's intentions in the making. In a book written for university dance teachers (Lavender, 1996) in which he developed a pedagogy of critical interpretation and evaluation, he did in fact include the student choreographer's views on their own work as one element for consideration among others in the critical community, as he called it, that is formed by the teacher and students. The *Luna* study envisions dance as a subjective experience and so positions itself principally against the theory of intentional fallacy by locating the meanings of the *Luna* choreography in the perceptions of *Luna's* participants. *Luna's* participants, as we shall see, actually expressed various points of view about where meaning lies including those of intentional fallscists, whether in the dance itself, with the artists' articulated explanations of the work or then again in their own imagination.

Dance theories and methodologies from three dance-experienced philosophers have also informed ideas and choices throughout the study: movement analyst and theorist Rudolf Laban (1988), dance phenomenologist Sondra Fraleigh (1999), and critical dance researcher Susan Foster (1995).

Laban Movement Analysis, in which I have acquired an expertise and certification, was particularly useful when observing and describing movement during *Luna's* creative process and performances. Laban's attention not only to the quantitative and measurable aspects (body, shape, space and time) but the qualitative as well (called "attitudes towards space, time, weight and flow" or "efforts" in the Laban system) guided my consciousness while observing, interpreting and writing about the *Luna* choreography. Some of his insights about the meaning of movement in people's lives, and in society in general, have also informed the discussions in this study. In particular, it was his notion of four "perceptual filters" by way of which we perceive and understand movement (thinking, sensing, feeling and intuiting) that gave structure to some of my data analysis of audience meaning-making strategies (p. 114-5). But where I have long taken issue with Laban Movement Analysis is in the contention that the principles of the system are actual immutable "laws of movement," as Laban and his disciples have claimed. And so in this study, I am fully committed to the subjectivity of movement observation and analysis. As an illustration of this subjectivity, this ethnography interweaves, for instance, my own descriptions of the *Luna* choreography with those of some *Luna's* dance audience members and dance critics who perceived and articulated the movement phenomena differently than I did.

I came across Fraleigh's book on dance phenomenology (1987) over 15 years ago, but wasn't able to embody its propositions fully until attending an intensive workshop with her. By the time she had published her book, of course, grounds for a field of dance phenomenology had been laid down by Sheets-Johnstone's seminal volume *The Phenomenology of Dance* in 1966. Fraleigh's notions about the qualities of attention we give to our actions, laid out in a more recent essay about witnessing frogs as if they were dancing (1999), were influential in honing my "way of being" (that is, the quality of my movement and behavior while in the field with *Luna*). Her account of



phenomenology also turned my awareness to the *Luna* spectators' "horizons of expectations," in other words the experiences and knowledge of contemporary dance with which they entered the theater. Some of these spectators' expectations were revealed in the course of the focus groups in which I asked them about their motivations in coming (Figure 7.2). The introspective methods of phenomenological research, such as being fully aware in the moment of observation and the use of intuition, provided me with valuable insights about participants' and researcher's perceptions alike. But these methodological strategies alone were not sufficient to the aims of this project. It was only in combination with more extroverted data collection methods such as interviewing, holding focus groups, and coding data that I was able to construct a comprehensive ethnography of the *Luna* event.

In Foster's class on dance anthropology, she offered us techniques of critical reading, and provided a reader of writings about the body that she had culled from anthropologists' writings. My initial experiences in fieldwork and ethnography were the result of her class assignment to investigate an evening of Renaissance dance. As for her own texts, the semiotic analysis she made of four prototypical choreographic projects (1986), while too limited in scope to explain my own findings on *Luna* audience and artists' meanings, gave me a model to build upon as I sought to distinguish the kinds of meaning-making in this study. Her analytic grid of choreographic project types led me to the notion of creating "sites of consensus" while organizing the *Luna* data. And in the same book, she also wrote about the significance of performance "frames" for dance audiences, a idea that I have developed further in my description and interpretation of the audience's perspective.

In terms of "sensual scholarship," as is the case for so many dance researchers, I am a dancer who exhibits a preference for a sensual, kinesthetic apprehension of dance and possess the memories of a dancer's bodily experiences. And so it was inevitable that my body would respond to those of the dancing (and non-dancing) participants. The outcome of this physical



empathy is manifest in my fieldnotes, coding and descriptive and analytic texts of this study. For instance, it was through my own bodily awareness that I attended to dancers' injuries and energy expenditures, their sensations as they danced, the minute movements of spectators as they watched performances, the ways in which choreographic movements became meaningful for various participants, and more. This belief in a physical knowledge and wisdom, sometimes even in the primacy of the senses, as Bull<sup>7</sup> (1997, pp. 269-288) has written, is an ethos that is also deeply embedded in many parts of the contemporary dance world that was examined in this study. Some contemporary dance training programs and approaches have even coined the concept of "body/mind," affirming the interdependence of mental and physical ways of knowing. And a certain group of dance ethnologists and aesthetic theorists have begun to insist on the integration of bodily experiences with mentalist understandings.

Certain dance ethnologists (Sklar, 1991), sociologists (Thomas, 2003, pp. 64-88), along with a few other cultural theorists (Howes, 1991; Stoller, 1997), somatic aestheticians (Fraleigh, 1999; Shusterman, 1999), and dance pedagogy theorists (Fortin, 1994; Green, 1996) have been arguing for a re/cognition of the body as a research tool and means to understanding. In his methodological approach to fieldwork by way of the senses, Howes (1991) pointed to anthropologists' realization that the Geertzian interpretive model with its "metaphor of the text" had in the end led to the predominance of a visual or ocular paradigm. Instead of the "observing eye," as he told it, Clifford had consequently provoked a turn towards a "dialogical anthropology." But Howes insists that this new interplay of voices needed to be further shifted towards an interplay of the senses, in order to "position the utterances," as he puts it (pp. 6-8). In his fieldwork (1986) based on olfactory data, cultures are literally seen as ways of sensing the world. Dance

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<sup>7</sup>Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull appears in the bibliography as Cynthia Novak, her maiden name under which she first wrote and which she later changed.

ethnologist Sklar (1991, 2000) also champions this view in particular for dance scholars, as she continues to build a compelling case for what she calls “empathetic kinesthetic perception” as a primary research method. And although kinesthetic empathy is only one among several “tools” that I have used for gathering evidence for this study, my insider abilities to empathize with participants’ physical states of being have been a crucial contribution to this study.

## 2.7 Québécois dance literature and research

My knowledge of the understandings of and attitudes towards contemporary dance, and particularly those of Québécois artists, was developed by way of texts by Québécois dance writers and researchers, and in the course of face-to-face conversations with them throughout the years. Some of the writers I will review here were dancers themselves, and others have been arts researchers with backgrounds in other art forms such as theatre history or dance criticism. I will focus on a selection of writing which proved to have a direct bearing on this study: five monographs (Arbour, 1999; Barras, 1995; Époque, 1999; Febvre, 1995; Tembeck, 1991, 1994a), Tembeck’s doctoral dissertation (1994b), and several essays from the catalogue of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal* (Albert, 1987; Bourassa, 1987; Davida, 1989 and 1992; Febvre, 1991; Marleau, 1985). These authors develop the literary genres of choreographic biography (both celebratory and critical), dance history, and aesthetic description and analysis. Although coming from the visual rather than the performing arts, Arbour is included with the others because of her singular socio-historical analysis of the dynamics inherent in the production and dissemination of contemporary Québécois art.

Two of the five monographs were written as what Johnathan David

Jackson (2005) termed hagiographies <sup>8</sup>, by which he meant celebratory accounts, of choreographer Laurin (Barras, 1995) and of the dance company *Nouvelle Aire* (written by the company's co-founder Martine Époque (1999). Époque's first-person narrative on the early modernist period in Montréal provided some useful historical data about the role of her own dance company in Québécois society, in particular some first person accounts of the period during which Laurin worked in her early years as a dancer with *Nouvelle Aire*. Barras' homage to choreographer Ginette Laurin (1995) revealed his admiration for dancers' heroism and drew a historic portrait of the larger Montréal dance world in which Laurin developed her career. His book read like a short novel (at 134 pages) that told the story of a young woman from a small town and a poor family who would be a dancer, and her arduous rise in the face of adversity to become one of Québec's great choreographers. Barras' research involved two in-depth interviews with Laurin (I-HB1, I-HB2) which were also used as data for the *Luna* study with his permission, and included repeated visits to her studios and performances to observe her work and process. Material from his interviews provided confirmation and additional insights to the sections on Laurin's background and artistic views.

Québec authors Michèle Febvre and Iro Tembeck were professors in the *Département de danse* of the *Université du Québec à Montréal* at the time of this study. They were also senior artists and long-time insiders to the events they discuss in their writings. Their carefully researched books were substantial sources of historical information and philosophical contexts for this ethnography. Febvre's monograph (1995) was an aesthetic inquiry that sought to identify and define the varieties, nature and history of the interdisciplinary concept called *danse-théâtre* which includes many Québec

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<sup>8</sup> In a book review Jackson (2005) critiqued the historiography of black American dance in the '80s for the influence of hagiographies which he characterized as "[...] celebratory surveys of great figure and big trends." He then advocated, as do I, in favor of "more critical attention to theoretical problems of nomenclature, classification, historical documentation, and critical interpretation" (p.134).

choreographers. The first chapter reviews Occidental art dance history as a swing between "pure" virtuoso dance and expressive "theatrical" dance, the latter of which is the subject of her thesis. Several of Laurin's choreographies are woven into her analyses, and specific aspects of their aesthetics are discussed, as will be seen later in this study. But it was in particular her methodical investigation of the terminology by which dance forms are categorized that clarified my own concept of contemporary dance.

Tembeck's book *Danser à Montréal: Germination d'une histoire chorégraphique* (1991) remains to date the sole book that aspires to a comprehensive dance history specific to Montréal, outside of monographs and collection of writings on specific choreographers. She also completed a doctoral dissertation (1994b), to which I will refer when discussing certain aesthetic qualities of *Luna* in view of defining and situation what she also called *nouvelle danse montréalaise*. While not always in agreement with her assessments of historical trends and choreographic works, I found her writings (e.g. Tembeck, 1988, 1991, 1994a, 1994b) useful to this project in particular because of the social context she provided for both the local Montréal dance world and Québec society-at-large. Two of her book's chapters are devoted to the description and interpretation of the work of *nouvelle danse* choreographers from 1975 to 1990, in which she features Laurin among others, and who she named *les independents* (pp. 189-248). Her concise descriptions and interpretations of the work of individual artists shed light on her view of a few of their most noteworthy choreographies. In these texts she described salient features of their themes and movement styles, and concluded with an evaluation of their contribution to the development of the art form in Montréal. In the postscript to this book, Tembeck crystallized her critical evaluation of those *independents* in the wake of postmodernism:

Images, choreographic and otherwise, are piled up, creating a whole that is not one and whose guiding principle is "impurity"

[...] Composite images, rather than dream icons, stream before us. Works are overcoded, with multiple layers of meaning -- thickets of choreographic discourse that only the lucky can penetrate. (Tembeck, 1994a, p. 120)

While I concur with Tembeck about the fragmentation and complexity of these contemporary dance styles (like that of *Luna*), my own experience of these same characteristics has not led me to a skeptical view of their artistic vitality and meaningfulness. In a final assessment of Laurin's frenzied and risky gestural style, as she termed it, Tembeck (1991) calls her (along with Edouard Lock) one of the artistic "children of fast-food, of videoclips and breakdancing" <sup>i</sup> (p. 121). A close and literal interpretation of this phrase suggests that Laurin's dance is disposable and breakneck, easily consumed and certainly not nourishing. She further evaluated this kind of choreography as one that leads to confusion, and whose meanings were impenetrable because overcoded. Throughout her texts she appears to have carried a nostalgia for a past era of modernist dance, lamenting what she perceived as the loss of an earlier aesthetic to which she had adhered and which, as she phrased it, "bore witness to history" and "referred to a collective memory."

From 1985 to 1989 the *Festival international de nouvelle danse* (FIND) published a catalogue during each edition, which offered both biographical and analytical texts about Montréal choreographers. These included my first attempts to identify the social context and artistic qualities of pan-Canadian, and then a younger, group of Québécois choreographers (Davida 1988; 1992). My texts briefly examined the qualities of choreographies, prefaced by a few words on their cultural and geographical context. In the first essay (1988) I encapsulated Laurin's current work as playful style studies, noting her tendency to create a gymnast's playground of stage props "from which to catapult her free-flowing airborne dancers" (1988, p. 31). In the second essay

(1992) I was concerned with the aesthetic orientations of a younger generation of Montréal choreographers in their twenties at the time, and the text was composed out of material from a dozen in-depth interviews with artists. This essay foreshadowed the *Luna* project because of its engagement in face-to-face in-depth interviews and its favoring of insiders' voices.

Four other socio-historical essays on Québec dance by indigenous authors were also published (in French with English translations) in the catalogues of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*. A piece by Marleau (1985) was reprinted from the Québec theatre journal *Jeu*, from a thematic issue on dance in Québec. Dance critic Albert (1987), theatre historian Bourassa (1987) and dance researcher Febvre (1991) also wrote essays that were commissioned for the festival catalogues. This quartet of historical essays, while not referring at length to Laurin's work, began to build a complex and sometimes contradictory portrait of the events, protagonists, and ideas that have marked Québec contemporary dance since its inception. Their accounts were constructed from differing viewpoints and data and bear witness to the subjective nature of the dance historian's task. Former dance critic Albert (1987) narrated the rise of Montréal's French-language choreographers, whom he portrayed as pioneers forging unique dance styles because of their cultural isolation in English-speaking North America. Albert devoted a paragraph to Laurin's aesthetics, characteristics which I still find apparent (with the exception of "casualness") in the more recent *Luna* choreography:

With Ginette Laurin [...] dance ideally takes on a fluidity bordering on casualness. Her style is invariably infused with gusto and energy, and is theatrical only in its broadest outlines. She does not shy away from irony and her humor is like an added charm, unique among her counterparts in Montréal [...].  
(1987, p. 28)



On the other hand, Bourassa's chronicle (1987) is replete with historical details about the modernist period just previous to the rise of Laurin, but suggests quite another view of the same choreographic movement in Montréal. In Bourassa's account, although Québec contemporary dance was created in cultural isolation, it was from the beginning under the influence of its immigrant predecessors, and engaged in dialogue with many artist discourses from the world outside of Québec. His essay ends where Laurin and her contemporaries began, as Québec dance entered what he called "the hybrid or 'impure' aspects of the post-paradigm phase of modernism" (p. 23). As for Marleau, his dance history (1985) was built upon a single interview with Québec modernist dance pioneer Jeanne Renaud. In it he discussed a few of the features of the formative *Refus Global* period of the 1940s and its aftermath, and its link to the work of the younger choreographers of the 1990s. His text tells the story of a shift from abstraction to expressionism, in which proponents of modernist dance like Françoise Sullivan and Jeanne Renaud went to work in Europe and the U.S. in the 1950s to "escape the difficult cultural climate of Québec" (pp. 78-83).

Like Tembeck, dance researcher Febvre had been an insider, because a dancer, in the dance world she depicted. Her research project on dance-theater (1995), posited a socio-philosophical analysis of the movement qualities, thematic orientations and effects of the bodily presence of some of the dance world's best-known artists. Febvre (1991) claimed the existence of a kind of "choreographic void" in the generation of Québec choreographers who were her own artistic peers (i.e. Fortier, Laurin, Lévillé, Lock, etc.) because they did not "have a chance to practice their art before reaching adulthood." And so Febvre affirmed, "Québec dance has built itself upon a certain innocence and has been more concerned with developing a personal vision than with breaking with a culture of choreography to which [...] it never belonged (p. 51)". But like Bourassa and Marleau, she also wrote about

an influx of influences from the art world outside of Québec on Québécois dance. Febvre recognized the signs of postmodernism in the aesthetics of Laurin and her contemporaries in "the profusion of the semantic and semiotic [...] a kinetic explosion of variegated corporal movements" (p. 54). Her own assessment of her contemporaries' choreography is that of a metaphor for freedom, as she wrote: "[...] on the whole [...] there is a kind of liberation of signs. They exist now for their own sake and for the pure joy of semiotics, that can be considered the counterpart of gestural jubilation" (p. 55).

And finally my understanding of historical contexts for Québécois dance was enriched by two diverse texts by Febvre (1988) and Tembeck (1988a) about the modernist dances created during the *Refus Global* period in the late 'forties, as well as an interview with *Refus* choreographer Jeanne Renaud (Davida, 1997a). The two former texts were commissioned for a catalogue about dances by Sullivan and Renaud made in 1948 that they reconstructed for a performance at the *Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal* on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Refus Global*. In her text Tembeck (1988a) advanced a narrative of these dances as emblematic of the *Refus Global* artistic and social revolution in a time when classical ballet had barely gained a foothold in Québec. From another vantage point, Febvre (1988) looked closely at the Automatist ethos of the choreographies themselves. She did this by characterizing their features, and narrating the choreographers' journeys within the wider Modern Dance world of the 'forties. In this same catalogue, Sullivan's seminal poetic text "*La danse et l'espoir*" (1948) was also reprinted, literally translating as "dance and hope," a text that was inserted into the *Refus Global*'s manifesto. In it she called for "Automatist dancing " which she explained as one that liberated the body's energies through spontaneous gestures and expressed vividly felt emotions. And an in-depth interview with Renaud (Davida, 1997a) revealed some of the ways in which her "post-*Refus*" aesthetics had been informed by her contacts with American postmodern dancers in New York City.

To complete this section on the contexts and aesthetics of Québec choreography I offer a book by veteran art historian Arbour (1999), which provided a socio-historical analysis of the dynamics inherent in the Québécois contemporary<sup>9</sup> art world. Although her narrative is centered on the visual arts, many of Arbour's propositions also hold true for Québécois dance. At the core of her text is an account of the "states and conditions" of contemporary arts practices as fraught with the tensions between an ideology of mass consumption in opposition to the ethos of artistic freedom and individualistic expression that was bred by modernism and postmodernism. This tension arose at every level of the *Luna* dance event, whether within the dance company, among audience members, the assessments of dance specialists.

## 2.8 Sociological studies on artists and audiences

A selection of sociological studies about arts audiences and the economics of art-making from across Canada, the United States, in Québec and Montréal, gave statistical substance to some of my own findings. With the exception of Cloutier and Pronovost's research (1996), and Perreault's dissertation (1988a), these studies were government sponsored and so carried political aims. Perreault's work was partly funded by the professional organization of Québec dancers *Le Regroupement Québécois de la danse*, and calls for improved working conditions for that constituency, while Cloutier and Pronovost were researchers from the *Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières* and part of an inter-university research group on arts-going publics. The massive government-sponsored research projects drew from large data pools, and the professional consulting firms that conducted them worked systematically and within the scientific norms of North American sociological

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<sup>9</sup> Arbour chose the term contemporary to speak of arts practices that came after Modern Art.

practices. Their methods relied largely on filling out survey sheets, phone interviews and analysis of the resulting data, along with data from other statistical sources. And of course the mandates of the studies were those of the sponsoring governments and cultural organizations, with their economic and political agendas aimed at increasing ticket sales and cultural funding for arts presenters. The questions that I asked about the meaning of the *Luna* dance event to/ for its protagonists were rarely asked in these contexts. None of these sociologists engaged in long-term fieldwork and participant observation in the “fields” they were studying, with only Cloutier and Provonost (1996) allowing the time for in-depth interviews with a small sampling of arts spectators.

In terms of the characteristics and behaviors of dance audience members, I frequently compared the results of my own sample of 22 spectators to the latter government-sponsored studies of “arts consumers” across Canada (in which both the arts-going public and the population in general were polled) (Cultur'Inc/ Décima, 1990), and to Sussmann's meta-analysis of cross-country audience profiles in the United States that was carried out by the National Endowment for the Arts in the 1990s (Sussmann, 1998). These national studies in Canada and the United States provided differentiated results for various arts disciplines, singling out those who attended “modern” dance performances. The Canadian study even distinguished findings by province, and so results were available that were specific to the province of Québec. The Canadian research team conceived of demographic profiles for various groups of arts-goers by cross-referencing their motives for spectating, their tastes and habits.

It was a collection of research reports on Québec culture and arts, published by the *Institute Québécois de Recherche sur la Culture* (Baillargeon, 1996), that I first discovered the Cloutier and Pronovost study (1996). Their methodology interviews with a small but limited sample and analysis of arts-going Québécois, and in their analysis they proposed a “motive grid” for

audience attendance which provided an initial model for my own theorizing. In terms of defining characteristics of local Montréal audiences, my own data was supported by the CROP's comparative analysis of three audience profiles (2001). They gathered their data during polls conducted at several editions of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal* in which *O Vertigo* was presented, and was the only professional study with relevance to *O Vertigo's* audiences.

As for Perreault's research about artistic practices, his essay on passion as a motive to choose the vocation of dancer (1988b) was a post-doctorate reflection on the implications of his study on gender and the economic status of Montréal dancers (1988a), and in it he posed a similar set of questions to my own. For instance, but in different manners, we both ask what brings people to choose the *métier* of dancer under adverse conditions and a lack of social status. Perreault responded that although it wasn't a generally accepted sociological category to date, it could only be "passion" that determines such a choice. His study is now over 17 years old, but from all evidence and even with the institutional growth of the *métier* in Montréal, the financial and physical difficulties for dancers have not much improved (Fondation Jean-Pierre Perreault, 2004). But Perreault didn't discuss the varieties of that passion. This is a task that I have undertaken in this ethnographic study, and this time not only in the case of the dancers but also for a full spectrum of dance event participants.

I have also integrated findings from two studies by the Québec *Ministère de la culture et de communications* on arts financing . One is a 15-year old study on arts financing by the firm Samson Bélair Deloitte & Touche (1990) and another a recent summary of a study of the socio-economic situation of professional Canadian artists based on the 2001 Statistics Canada census by Hill Stratégies Recherche Inc. (2004). I felt both were exemplary and reliable sources of statistical analysis because of their long professional experience and reputation as art world research firms, and the fact that they

accessed large data pools. Their findings lent further credibility (and were more recent than Perreault's 1988 study) to my contention throughout this study that the contemporary dance profession is a perilous one in economic terms.

## 2.9 Conclusion

This examination of the textual sources and resources for this study unearths many layers of theoretical ground that I have excavated for this ethnography of the *Luna* dance event. Although centered in the interdisciplinary juncture of dance studies and ethnography, theoretical insights were also gleaned from numerous other fields: aesthetics, movement analysis, sociology, cultural studies, dance history and more.

The researchers included in this chapter have been seen alternately as contributing seminal ideas and models to that of the dance event and its dynamics, providing initial directions for a study of this nature, and as having advanced critical debates in which I could position and anchor my own views.

At least half a century of theorizing about dance events and dance ethnology, along with a movement towards bringing Western art forms into the fold of anthropology, has made this *Luna* project possible and perhaps inevitable. The relatively new field of Dance Studies has included both cultural and critical streams whose proponents argue for the importance of widening the researcher's gaze of dance performance and choreography to include physical, social and historical contexts. And from within a small but significant circle of aesthetic philosophers and arts-minded sociologists there has been recent attention to the art form of dance, and the expressive "dancing body," as a viable subject of thought. I believe the time has come to further advance an anthropology of contemporary dance, as Kealiinohomoku (1969/1970) suggested and Novack (1990) urged us to do. And it is through the holistic framework of the dance event, and a close



examination of its components and the diverse viewpoints of its participants, that I propose to integrate these many theoretic propositions.

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Original French texts

<sup>i</sup> "enfants du *fast-food*, *videoclip* et *breakdancing* [...] Iro Tembeck

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES

The question of the nature and meaning of dances and dance events, their form and function as Franziska Boas (1944) phrased it, has preoccupied dance anthropologists since they established the founding theories and methodologies for dance anthropology (see for instance Boas, 1944; Kealiinohomoku, 1969/1970; Kurath, 1960; Lange, 1975; Royce, 1977; Snyder, 1992) . And it was through a cluster of their trademark ethnographic methods that I have searched for responses to the question of how and why we contemporary dancers dance.

This chapter begins with a consideration of my choice of research question, design and methods. This study is then situated within a postpositivist framework, and questions of language are addressed which arose from the bilingual nature of the Montréal dance milieu.

The following section describes the parameters of the project in terms of choice of case, timeline, sites, and genres of participants included. The evolution of four core questions that structured interviews, focus groups (and to some degree field observations) is discussed. And then certain limitations of this study are exposed, as well as the ethical considerations and procedures that were built into the research design, and an explanation of how they were carried out.

Next, a rationale and account of the various methods employed is elaborated, including how I behaved during fieldwork, entered and left the field, apprehended, recorded and wrote-up the data, and finally how I

managed the coding and interpretation processes. It is only then that I review these methods in terms of several validity criteria in support of the credibility and trustworthiness that were specific to this qualitative research project.

### 3.1 Research question and design

The underlying tension in the debates [about contemporary art] that participants find difficult to acknowledge is the necessary survival of the category and institution of 'art' for its own critiques. Why, after all, be 'an artist'? Why not just be done with the whole business? This is a question of genuine anthropological interest. (Marcus and Myers, 1995, p. 9)

For quite some time now, in North America as in Europe, a controversy has been raging around the subject of contemporary art. It concerns its legitimacy, its intelligibility or simply the question 'why do it' within a society almost entirely determined by economics and information.<sup>i</sup> (Arbour, 1990, from book jacket)

This project arose through the kind of vital questioning about the survival of art as a category of human enterprise that is voiced above by Marcus and Myers, and Arbour. These concerns are currently shared by many of my colleagues in the contemporary dance world. A master's thesis, completed a decade earlier, had led me to an interest in examining artistic dance practices within their cultural contexts and so to the field of dance anthropology. It was there that I discovered the anthropologists' notion of "cultural events." I soon realized that this kind of inquiry for contemporary

dance would require an interdisciplinary “reconfiguring [of] art and anthropology” (Marcus and Myers, 1995, book title). In other words, it would mean reframing a dance performance with by way of the dance event concept.

This point of origin led me to an initial research question: “How do Montréal *nouvelle danse* events make meaning for their dancing and non-dancing participants as they are conceived, developed, presented, evaluated and documented?” I soon realized that I would have to begin by establishing boundaries, and so to find a beginning and ending. This would entail a description of its time and space components, activities and participants. To begin, I organized my research design with the fundamental journalistic elements of who, what, where, when and why (Anfara Jr., Brown and Manione, 2002; Kealiinohomoku, 1976). At the same time, Snyder’s hierarchy came into question, and the notion that there were various macro and micro levels to be considered. The question of “who?” was answered by the stories told of by *Luna* participants about their backgrounds, identities and roles in the event; the “what?” of *Luna* was a detailed account of various phases and levels of activities gleaned from fieldnotes and artifacts bearing witness to what participants said and did; the notion of “where?” emerged from the data in the forms of the geography, physical locations and special configurations of *Luna*; and asking “when?” led to a discussion of multiple time frames, minute time management and timings at various levels of the event. These initial descriptions and interpretations created a detailed portrait of the dance event, a prerequisite for the task of determining “why” *Luna* took place, in other words what meanings it held for its participants.

Underlying this choice of research question was an urgent need to understand why Montréal contemporary dancers create and perform for audiences under the kind of adverse physical, social and economic conditions, discussed briefly in Chapter I. And I greatly needed to refresh and deepen

my personal commitment to working in the Montréal dance world through in-depth study.

Perreault (1988a) mused about passion as a motivation for what he proved to be a perilous career choice for dancers (1988b). But in drawing the parameters of this study, I decided to look beyond the dancers' lives alone and to consider all "participant groups" and the entire enterprise of dance-making and dance presentation, what insiders tend to call a "choreographic project." The boundaries of this case study included both the "innermost doings" at the center of the event vs. informal "peripheral" activities (Rönstrom, 1989). And as explained earlier, I finally limited the quest for meaning to two of its possible senses, life meanings and choreographic meanings for participants.

### 3.2 Ethnographic methods

The concept of dance ethnography employed in this study, briefly defined in the introductory chapter, implies both engaging in extensive fieldwork and composing a written document. It requires a detailed approach to gathering, transcribing, coding and interpreting and writing up data collected in the field which account for cultural contexts, processes that are elaborated in this chapter. It can be distinguished from archival historical research or dance criticism and aesthetics by its copious incorporation of indigenous points of view, the evidence gathered from face-to-face encounters with protagonists, as well as observation and analysis of what participants said and did over an extended period.

Why did I settle on ethnography as the appropriate and effective methodology? Although in qualitative research form usually follows function (Flick, 1998. p. 5), before my introduction to dance anthropology I wasn't even conscious of the kinds of questions that I have posed in this study. It



had seldom occurred to me to wonder about the socio-cultural meanings of my dancing before my fateful reading of Kealiinohomoku's classic essay (1969/1970). And so in the case of this study of the *Luna* event, question and methodology were crystallized at one and the same moment. While examining my own world view in preparing for this study, I became aware that it was through daily interactions with others in my dance world that I had formulated my beliefs and ways of being in the world. In other words, I came to understand that a pragmatist ethos underlay my thinking, as was true for symbolic interactionists. Embarking on doctoral research was a later-in-life chance I seized to concentrate deeply and extensively on the nature of the artistic practice that had long been my life's work. I was also drawn to ethnography because of my desire to experience fieldwork over a long period of time in dance studios and theatres, and to take the time to engage in conversations with the protagonists of a local *nouvelle danse* event.

There were also compelling practical reasons for this choice of methods. Those I have employed here demanded skills and abilities I had already honed throughout the years: conversational interviews, movement observation, and the organization of large quantities of information. The office where I work includes an international dance resource center containing copious documentation on Montréal contemporary dance. And finally, the fields I needed to enter for the *Luna* project were populated with acquaintances, and so relatively easy for me to access, although as will be discussed later, being an insider presented another set of difficulties.

### 3.3 A post-positivist methodology

In their chapter in *Researching Dance*, Green and Stinson (1999) discussed the concepts of postpositivist research methodology as they applied to dance. It was this text that finally enabled me to imagine drawing together

the various theoretical strands offered by Kealiʻi Honomoku, Snyder, Ronström, Becker, and others.

Based on a framework proposed by Lather (1991), who in turn had applied postpositivist concepts to feminist studies, Green and Stinson (1999) presented a fluid classification of four methodologies according to their purposes: prediction, understanding, emancipation and deconstruction (pp. 92-93). The first category (prediction) was considered synonymous with the dictates of positivism, the scientific approach in the human sciences that presumes the existence of a value-free objective truth, and proposes a hypothesis to be tested, proven and generalized to all other cases. The last three categories of purpose (understanding, emancipation and deconstruction) together composed what Lather termed postpositivist inquiry. As with the *Luna* project, this latter form of research is based on the belief that reality is socially constructed and so subjective. In this postpositivist model for research, the aim is generally to “interpret or understand a particular research context,” and one in which the researcher “seeks multiple perspectives and meanings” (Green and Stinson, 1999. p. 94). The research design of this study is postpositivist in this sense, seeking an understanding of a Montréal contemporary dance event within its cultural context, and demonstrating how it produces a multitude of meanings for its various participants.

As for the motive of emancipation, the emphasis on descriptive interpretation in this study doesn't to my mind preclude its potential to have an impact on its participants' consciousness. As did Green (1996), I believe that an awareness of the dynamics of dance events can “equip [its proponents] them with the wherewithal to activate change” (p. 76). For instance, it is through examination of the purposes served by the *Luna* event for its proponents I am certainly hoping to offering up convincing evidence of the social and cultural value of contemporary dance performance to its public and private funding agents, and of course to the dancers themselves.

As for the deconstructivist agenda, in the perspective that Green and Stinson (1999) have defined above, another intentional sub-plot of this ethnography is to destabilize some of the cherished beliefs of both the dance world itself and society-at-large about contemporary dance events. To these ends, for instance, are a close examination of how a choreographic project was financed, the nature of those dancers' work, how this dance functioned to make meaning for audiences, and especially how this kind of artistic dance is evaluated and so critiqued by its power brokers the expressive specialists (critics, juries, historians, programming directors). In other words, this study aims to reveal how the dance event functioned to the benefit or the detriment of its participants.

### 3.4 Questions of language

Language was a complex issue in this case study because it was situated in a community that characteristically shifted, often unconsciously, between Canadian English and Québécois French. As it turned out, all *Luna* participants in this study were functionally bilingual, speaking (and writing) both French and English, with varying degrees of fluency. Some of them displayed a propensity for the local patois "Franglais" that intermingles both languages.<sup>1</sup> Interviews were undertaken in whichever one that was the native to the person being interviewed, with the exception of Lagacé who declared that he felt it more "natural" for us to be speaking together in English. The focus groups shifted between the two languages, and so I posed questions in both. And after much deliberation about how to organize the two languages within the ethnography in order to foster fluidity for readers, I decided along with my thesis directors to leave the body of the thesis

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<sup>1</sup> My own language skills as an Anglophone American (or as Montréalers say, with English as my mother tongue), fairly fluent in writing and speaking French, allowed me to undertake the translation of all texts in the dissertation from French-language speakers into English.

entirely in English, and to place the original French texts in the endnotes of each chapter.

I hired research assistants to help me in transcribing the interviews and focus groups recordings. I asked them to include intonation and expressive sounds (like laughter) when possible. They not only helped me with the burden of this labor-intensive task but maximized the accuracy of the French portions. These research assistants were dancing and non-dancing university students and graduates with strong language skills: Ray Brown, Karine Denault, Ben Hatcher, Christine LaBon, Nathalie Melançon, Julie Papin, Aden Seaton, and Fleur Tweedle. The German language dance reviews were translated by a native German speaker Julia Bendlin, who was an intern at *Tangente* at the time.

### 3.5 Parameters of the research design

The methodologies of established ethnographic practice guided the research design process. This section discusses the choice of case, timeline, occasions and settings, types of participants, core questions that structured the interviews, limitations and ethical considerations of the *Luna* study.

#### 3.5.1 Choosing the *Luna* case

At the origin of this study I set out to include several dance events, hoping to be able to identify a prototypical Montréal dance event. But I eventually reconciled with the choice to limit the research project to a single case study as a practical matter, in part because of the massive quantity of potential data available. But it also quickly became evident that narrowing the study to one event would be the most efficient way of addressing in-depth the complexities of my research question.

Another motive for the choice of *Luna* was its representivity of a group of large-scale and highly valued Montréal contemporary dance companies<sup>2</sup>, and I reasoned that a company of this size and proportion would offer a particularly vast and dense pool of data about the making and presenting of contemporary dance events, and also about the widespread international touring network in which it toured. Based on past *O Vertigo* company projects, I knew that *Luna* would involve an extensive sampling of the various kinds of participants who people this contemporary dance world (critics, students, dancers, technical director, artistic collaborators, funding and touring agents, programmers, and so on). Furthermore, I knew that it would offer a substantial quantity of artifacts (posters, press materials, schedules, photos, CD-ROM, film, etc.).

This choice of case was also influenced, as Flick (1998) posited, by matters of convenience (p. 69). For instance, there was the willingness of Ginette Laurin to “let me in” and to tolerate my pervasive presence in her environment. She and I had nurtured a warm, collegial relationship over the years that seemed to foster trust and respect from the outset. Laurin warned me at our first interview that her creative work with dancers might sometimes become a private matter, requiring me to leave the studio. (I reassured her that this would cause no problems.) But in practice, not only did Laurin tolerate my presence everywhere that I followed her and her company members, but she even told me on several occasions that I was missed when not there! And yet another practical element in my choice was the fact that the time constraints of the *Luna* project corresponded to those of my research process.

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<sup>2</sup>This group includes choreographers Marie Chouinard, Édouard Lock and Jean-Pierre Perreault.

### 3.5.2 Timeline of the research project

In order to determine the nature and meaning of the *Luna* event, I looked beyond the performance event itself on a particular evening to examine the larger time span of its preparatory phase and probable, imagined aftermath. The fieldwork took place over 17 months, with about 250 hours spent in the field in all, including the pilot project (see field log in Appendix C). The entire process of data collection occurred over an even wider period of time, nearly three years, which began with four exploratory interviews in July 1998. I brought the data collection to a formal close the day I received answers to my interview questions from a dance presenter in Germany, by way of email correspondence, on May 5, 2002.

After the exploratory interviews, in which a flexible framework of four core questions was tested for clarity and pertinence to the research question and participants, I made initial contacts with the *O Vertigo* company and completed the first of two interviews with choreographer Ginette Laurin. I then drafted a written agreement between the dance company and myself. We undertook an initial negotiation, consequently revised and signed by Laurin and her administrator (text of contract in Appendix A). It was only then, in August 2000, that fieldwork on *Luna* began in earnest, in the *O Vertigo* studios, with observations of administrative planning for the project, without the dancers present. The dancers later returned to rehearse for summer tours to New York City and Jacob's Pillow with previous choreographic work.

I also seized the opportunity in the summer of 2000 to undertake a 5-day pilot study during *O Vertigo*'s week long summer residency at *Jacob's Pillow* in the United States, and before creative work had begun for *Luna*. It was in the relaxed, rural setting of "The Pillow" that I developed an approach to carrying out audience focus groups, had my first informal conversations with Laurin and was able to observe a public interview between Laurin and



“resident dance scholar” Szporer, a Montréal dance writer who was interviewed for this study. This preliminary work was followed by five months of fieldwork, including observation and interviews during the intensive creative process period for *Luna* in fall 2000 (during which I came in three times a week for 2-3 hours) and initial European performances in February 2001. I later followed the *Luna* project through several other stages of development: a filming session and final rehearsals before the fall 2001 tour, their August 2002 pedagogical workshop in which they taught movement from *Luna*, and a second Montréal performance. Although no longer in the field, I kept track of *Luna* touring, collecting additional press articles and touring schedules, until its last performance in Prague in November 2003.

As an administrative entity, the *Luna* dance event officially ended with its last scheduled performance in Prague. But the effects of this event most certainly continued in the short and/or long term memory of some of its participants (I still come across people speaking about *Luna* at this writing several years later). And like all other Canadian non-profit arts organizations who receive government funding, *O Vertigo* was obliged to write final administrative reports which would have an effect on future company funding. Through past examples, it also seemed likely that some dance researchers might discuss *Luna* in their writing a future date. But the only traces of “dance event aftermath” that were included in this study were 41 collected newspaper articles (21 are discussed in section 8.7), written by journalists and critics during the first two cycles of touring. There were also hints of how spectators might continue to think and talk about the *Luna* performance, recorded in fragments of conversation I overheard and recorded in fieldnotes one night as they left the theatre after the reprise presentation of *Luna* in Montréal.

### 3.5.3 Types of sites and spaces

The *Luna* dance event was multi-sited (Amit, 2000), with a “home field” in Montréal at the *O Vertigo* studios and the *Monument-National* where they presented their “home season.” But it was multi-sited in the sense that the event was also mounted in a multitude of theatres in many cities and countries. Although I was only able to accompany them to their Chicoutimi presentation in the Lac St-Jean region of Québec, my own travels as a dance presenter and scholar gave me the chance to interview several of the dance presenters who sponsored performances of *Luna* in New York City, Zurich, Lucerne and Düsseldorf.

My research took me mainly to participants’ workplaces and *Luna*’s performance spaces, but also occasionally to some of the places where they lived and socialized. For instance, certain interviews took place in participants’ homes, their favorite cafés and even on a city bus (Appendix D). I entered the offices not only of *O Vertigo*, but of a dance funding agent and a New York dance presenter as well. At the *O Vertigo* workplace I stationed myself alternately in the rehearsal studios, kitchen, entrance hall, office spaces, and even the dressing rooms. At the theaters where *Luna* was performed (included in this study) I found observation posts in backstage wings, lobbies and audience cafés, audience seating areas, and artists’ dressing and green rooms. And the CINARS performing arts showcase took me to into a downtown ballroom in Montréal’s Queen Elizabeth Hotel.

### 3.5.4 Genres of participants

Within the *Luna* dance event framework, I have included as participants those who were “caught up” in some way, even if as peripheral on-lookers. By seeking out the stories and points of view of as many genres

of participants as time and resources allowed, I felt that the most dense and complex understanding might be articulated, if never complete and comprehensive. All agreed with no hesitation to the inclusion of their real names in the final write-up.

At the core of the *Luna* event were those who mounted, performed and attended the *Luna* performance: the performing artists, audience, critics, and event personnel, as well as the staff and technical crew of the theatre building. But within the framework of the extended dance event (that included the preparation and aftermath), other genres of participants were also seen as part of the wider network of cooperation, in Becker's sense (1982), those who were needed to produce the choreographic project but also including those who were peripheral on-lookers.

More specifically, the vocational artists interviewed included eight *O Vertigo* dancers (the dance event's "dancing participants") including an apprentice and a replacement dancer, and also of course the choreographer and rehearsal director. The non-dancing artistic collaborators who were interviewed included the costume and light/image designer, and some of *O Vertigo* staff members (the general and the technical director, and a board member). Among the other non-dancing participants interviewed were also four dance presenters from different cities who had produced *Luna*, one *dance animateur*, four dance specialist writers, three researchers and a funding agent. As well, 22 audience members and 10 dance students from the company's summer workshop attended focus groups for this study (see Appendix D and Tables 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.4.1 and 5.4.2).

Also appearing in this study were *Luna* participants who were not interviewed, but appeared only in fieldnotes. For example, audiences were observed as they arrived at, watched and exited performances, informal showings and marketplace showcases. I seized opportunities to engage in informal spontaneous conversations, for instance with two company dancers, the initial composer and the sound designer. I also conversed informally with

a group of international presenters attending the *Luna* showcase at CINARS, six members of the *O Vertigo* administrative staff, and a second dance funding agent. At various points, this study also incorporated technical crews and box office personnel at the theaters in Montréal and Chicoutimi where *Luna* was performed, “front of house” staff, and even workers in the offices next door to *O Vertigo*’s studios. And as noted in the previous section, twenty-two dance writers were included in the study by way of the texts they had written about the *Luna* performance.

### 3.5.5 The four core questions

“I’m not sure I understand the question [...]” Jerry Antonyk,  
audience member (FG1)

As spectator Antonyk points out in his offhand remark above, interviewing participants was more like a conversation than a question-and-answer session, a dialogue in which meaning was continually negotiated. Four “families of questions” anchored the interviews and focus group discussions in light of their pertinence to my research. But the way in which they were articulated and functioned shifted continuously. These core questions concerned participants’ backgrounds, motivations, values and meaning-making processes in terms of the *Luna* event.

Focus group members, but not those interviewed individually<sup>3</sup>, were additionally requested to answer questions on survey sheets about basic social characteristics (Appendix E). There were no precisely worded questionnaires to guide either the conversations, only my notes about the nature of each of the four questions and their mutations as the study

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<sup>3</sup> In retrospect it would have been useful to use the survey sheets with all participants and not only focus group members. But fortunately most of the survey questions were answered during the interviews with only a few follow-up calls to complete the tables.

progressed. As each focus group and interview progressed, the wording of the questions changed and new strategies were formulated in the face of respondents' confusion, hesitancy or level of understanding. For instance, terms like "life meanings" and "choreographic interpretation" needed clarification at several junctures.

The first question was posed to all participants and remained relatively stable throughout: a variation on the request for them to "tell the story of their first contact with the dance world" and/or how they first became interested in professional dance (for the professionals). A corollary sub-question for was also posed to spectators: "what or who brought you to dance performances, and to *Luna* in particular?" I presumed that since attending contemporary dance performances was not a practice engaged in by all Montréalers from the time of birth nor a systematic part of every child's education, that there was a story to be told about a person and or an incident that instigated their first experience.

A second question was addressed only to *Luna's* arts professional participants (artists, personnel, presenters and expressive specialists). I ask them how they had entered the field of work, to tell about their training, and how they perceived their role in the *Luna* event. This line of questioning evoked stories about a complex series of life events that led to the adoption of dance world professions, and sometimes contained the seeds of answers to the third question about the meaning of their practice in the dance world.

The third question was about life meanings, and took on different forms for various kinds of participants. Dance professionals, students, and event personnel were generally asked about how their work in the dance world had brought meaning to their lives, and also to articulate the particular kind of meaning. For those who were more experienced spectators, the question was reformulated to ask why it was that they continued to attend, and what it meant to them in the course of their lives to go to dance performances. As for those who had just seen their first contemporary dance

presentation with *Luna*, I inquired whether they now felt inclined to attend another dance performance in the future and why, or why not.

The fourth question about meaning concerned the meaning of the performance of *Luna*, in terms of both the performance event and the dance work itself, for those who had attended. This question also endured many mutations, finally becoming a cluster of ever-shifting questions and sub-questions. Two distinct themes were eventually conceived which focused first on the genres and levels of meaning of *Luna* which were experienced or formulated, and second on the strategies for meaning-making employed during the performance. This question proved to be the most problematic. For instance, some of the spectators thought that by asking them about 'meaning' I was implying that they tell me about a narrative storyline for *Luna* (which wasn't my intention). And so because the *Luna* choreography was poetic and impressionistic in its structure and content, focus group members continued to occasionally expressed confusion about the question. I consequently began asking simply, alternately in French and in English, what they had experienced during the performance – something like "what happened for you as you watched the performance." I also tried framing this question in terms of "the kinds of relationships we have with these strange and abstract movements," "some kind of sense you make for yourself," and "levels or aspects of the dance" being watched. This category of questioning, when posed to the dancers, was a matter of asking how they motivated and found meaning for the *Luna* movements during creative sessions and performances.

These four questions also formed one of the bases for coding and organizing the findings. They also contributed to the structure of Chapters V, VII and VIII. Although they remained open-ended when asked, they clearly guided the flow and chronology of ideas in the discussions and interviews.



### 3.5.6 Limitations of this study

There was so much more I had intended to accomplish: a second case study of younger artists (for which I completed the fieldwork and interviews), additional interviews with yet more genres of participant, additional fieldwork such as traveling to Europe with the first company tour. But time and money restraints, missed opportunities, and the unpredictable nature of human interactions set limits to the scope of this study. There also came a point of saturation in the data when additional data or fieldwork seemed no longer to yield new insights. I am thinking here, in particular, of data in the form of 31 interviews, four focus groups and 37 press articles. As I reviewed the transcripts one day I realized that the themes and concepts arising from new data were becoming redundant. And so, while it is true that another set of observations and conversations may have yielded a different or more comprehensive narrative, I believed that a sufficiently wide array of information had been amassed for the purposes of this study.

There were certain pieces of information I was unable to obtain, and a few rare occasions for observation which were closed to me. The most crucial data that proved unobtainable was the detailed operating budget of *O Vertigo*, written up by the executive director. Even though there were other channels through which I might have persisted in finding out this public information, it was made clear to me that Lagacé didn't want this information to be published in a dissertation. He did however offer me a summary of the project budget for the *Luna* project itself (in Appendix M) and a few crucial facts and figures like the amount of the total operating budget. I wasn't invited to the "delicate" board of directors' meeting, an interview between Laurin and some film producers was announced to me as private, and I didn't enter in on a meeting between Lagacé and Canada Council dance agent Léger after the door was closed. As agreed to in the original consent form (Appendix A), by verbal agreement and because of ethical standards of the

field of anthropology, I took care not to be where participants were or might be uncomfortable with my presence.

There were occasions when I might have followed the company on tour to Europe to New York City, or to their technical residency at the Montréal *Maison de la Culture Mercier*. I did make an attempt to travel with them to Europe, but some of the touring dates were cancelled, which would have prolonged my stay to an untenable two-week stretch with no performances in the middle. In the end it was the demands of my professional life and the limits of my financial means that made these field trips impossible. It is important to point out that I undertook this doctoral work at a point when consecrating my time exclusively to the research project would have caused a survival crisis for the dance presentation space for which I was artistic director.

I would have liked to include, in view of enriching and widening the data pool, further in-depth interviews with yet more central and peripheral participants (three other *Luna* dancers, the sound designer, box office personnel, security guard, family members of artists, private corporate sponsors, etc.). The list of potential participant interviews (like the two company dancers who cancelled our meetings for lack of time) was still long, and growing. One dancer, Donald Weikart declined being interviewed because, as he put it in an informal conversation, he was already sufficiently analytical. There was still no official end in sight for the touring of *Luna* which was still in negotiation, but I continued to collect the previews and reviews. But there came a point when time constraints set down by the university program obliged me to move on to the coding and interpretation phase. And so I passed over the chance to follow the later "legs" of the *Luna* tour and to gather views of *Luna* from yet more audiences, presenters and their staffs in Hungary, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Italy and the Czech Republic. Even as *O Vertigo* was on the road, data for the *Luna* study was in the later phases of being shaped into the final document.

In the end, this was a single case study undertaken within the limited period of one choreographic project. The original plan involved a second contrasting case study, as mentioned above, one with young artists and an urban dance aesthetic. This data was never analyzed and the plan to include them was abandoned because of academic deadlines looming.

Finally, the far-reaching social implications of this dance event for Montréal society-at-large are suggested but never fleshed out in the course of the *Luna* study. Dance event professionals are seen as doing useful work, and dance events as meaningful occasions for all participants. And within the narrative that portrays the protagonists and the goings-on there are various kinds of discussion about social issues, values and views. But the scope of this project did not extend, at this time, towards an extensive analysis of how this event was perceived by event outsiders, nor of the way in which *Luna* was emblematic of its social environment.

### 3.5.7 Ethical considerations

I undertook fieldwork in an overt manner fully disclosing my role and the aims and repercussion of the study at all first encounters with participants. These actions are actually required by the code of ethics of organizations like the American Anthropological Association who have posted on their website statements such as “Anthropologists must do everything in their power to protect the physical, social, and psychological welfare and to honor the dignity and privacy of those studied” (2006).

Consent forms, written agreements and interview authorization forms based on practices already established by the *Université du Québec* were adapted to my study, presented to and signed by all participants before undertaking interviews and focus groups (Appendix A). The interview forms included a short description of the research project and the possibilities of its

future distribution. I also asked permission from participants either individually or as a group, whichever was most practical at the time, before undertaking observations and fieldnote writing, taking photos or video clips.

At the request of choreographer Laurin, I agreed never to insist on being present at meetings or rehearsals she deemed private (although a couple of unintentional mistakes were made in the field, with apologies). I applied this model of behavior for all situations I encountered in view of creating trusting relationships, even when it meant that certain events and information wouldn't be accessible. It was necessary to take into account that because I was an insider, most participants included in this study were dance world colleagues with whom I would continue to interact even after leaving the field. In another vein, Laurin added a clause to the consent form that I found most intriguing. It read that she would not review any of our interviews or my writing about her work (in Appendix A). As Laurin explained her request, because of her commitment to the Automatist credo she believed strongly that over-analysis might endanger her intuitive processes. I felt at once a sense of disappointment that the central protagonist in the *Luna* event would never read my story about her work and so verify its pertinence, but realized that I was also experiencing a feeling of freedom from her scrutiny.

I resolved not to include quotes or information in the final write-up that were deemed objectionable by their speakers. In order to assure this, I mailed paper copies of their interview transcriptions to all of the 39 who were interviewed, giving them the chance to inspect and change them if they so desired. Among the eight interviews that were in fact returned to me, much to my delight, six had inscribed on their transcripts further reflections (e.g. Demers in Appendix N) rather than eliminating material.

In this study I attempted to "democratize the narrative" by giving as much weight to a multitude of participants' accounts as to my own, even though it remained in the end my story of the dance event. And so as often

as was judicious, I incorporated participants' precise words and manner of speaking into the text of the study. Among these citations are excerpts from interviews, focus groups, and conversation heard and noted during fieldwork.

### 3.6 Fieldwork

I entered the field on April 7, 2000 by way of a phone call to set up a first meeting with choreographer Laurin. My immediate goal was to establish her willingness to have me undertake the research project with her company. It was crucial to begin quickly, as the planning phase for *Luna* was already underway. I entered with a preliminary set of questions, theoretical ideas and methods, but without a precise analysis grid at the onset. This section tells the story of the fieldwork (see detailed log in Appendix C) in which I developed an effective way of being in the field, discovered the type of participant observation that the *Luna* study required, forged a trusting relationship with event participants, and went about collecting various kinds of data.

#### 3.6.1 "Ways of being" in the field and approach to participant observation

Before entering the field and at the suggestion of my thesis director Dr. Beaudry, I created a map of my own pre-conceived ideas about the Montréal *nouvelle danse* milieu. This exercise of self-reflexivity helped to locate my insider presumptions, allowing me to take into account and eventually helped me to move beyond what I had long taken for granted (Giurchescu, 1999; Koutsouba, 1999). But even if organizing dance performances was my vocation, the inner workings of a large-scale dance company were still a mystery for me.

The role of the non-intrusive, quietly observing fieldworker was a novel experience for me and required a marked transformation of my characteristic behaviors. I soon acquired a particular "way of being in the field" by assuming the demeanor of an introspective observer and seeking out a place to situate myself physically that was "out of the way" of the goings-on (a place which sometimes shifted suddenly with little warning). I continued working to make my presence as unimposing as possible, and took special care not to react to (and so to influence) the artistic and administrative choices being made. In our second and last interview, Laurin reassured me that I had indeed found a quality of presence that was sufficiently discreet:

[...] we sometimes didn't even realize that you were there. And then "Whoops! Dena is here!" (Laurin and Davida laugh together.) We got used to your presence. It became part of the process. (They laugh together again.) You were also quite discrete. We didn't censure ourselves. [...] You became part of the process I think because you didn't react at all, and that's good. You didn't become a spectator. It could be bad to have someone react either positively or negatively, because it gives us cues right away. I was able to forget that there was someone in the studio. " (I-GL2)

Conscious and intuitive decisions about how to observe and in what way I might participate were tempered by the views and methods described by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) and Walsh (1998). In retrospect it seems to me that my role became what Junker (in Walsh, 1998) called "observer as participant" in which I fostered observation with limited participation (pp. 220-3). For instance, on several occasions the artists and staff drew me actively into the creative process or included me in their socializing by asking for advice, opinions or casually conversing. But I attempted for the most part



to remain a quiet observer who only occasionally asked questions. *O Vertigo* dancers took to perceiving me as a company archivist or scribe (perhaps because they saw me as always watching them and writing). I made jottings and headnotes almost continuously while observing.

My vantage point as an observer vacillated between that of an insider and an outsider. I am already native to this Montréal contemporary dance world in my multiple dance world roles. It is as a dance presenter that I had previously built rapport with most of the artistic professionals in this study. And so on several occasions *O Vertigo* dancers, and even Laurin herself one time, approached me during fieldwork to talk about issues surrounding the presentation of their work. At moments like this my dance presenter and ethnographer roles became blurred. This familiarity of an insider incurred some of the problems recounted by Giurchescu (1999), and particularly her warning about the danger of taking noteworthy details for granted, and the politics of being a native researcher who is hopelessly entangled inside a mesh of long-term professional relationships which she wouldn't be able to put behind her after leaving the field (pp. 45-46).

But it was in my new role as university doctoral student that I finally learned how to gain the emotional and intellectual distance necessary to reflect, interpret and analyze the goings on. I was best able to do this when in least familiar, peripheral positions: e.g. observation from the backstage wings during a performance, sitting far back in a studio corner during creative process. While in the field, I consciously censored my "insider impulses" to do things that I am used to doing, such as massaging a dancer's tense shoulders or offering my own interpretations during audience focus groups. And there were moments when I felt as if a participant in the dance event, by virtue of being its scribe and recorder. This would happen when someone turned to me suddenly to ask (often playfully) something like "Dena, did you get that?" or "You didn't really write that down Dena, did you?!" It wasn't until over a year after I left the field that I was able to see

myself as “separate” from the data stacked on my office floor, and so to review it more objectively in a contemplative frame of mind.

### 3.6.2 Entering the field, establishing rapport and leaving the field

I entered the field in the *O Vertigo* studios and offices with a first meeting with choreographer Laurin on March 3, 2000. Administrator Follian asked me to provide a schedule of my proposed visits to be reviewed and approved. Although I sought a careful balance between openness and discretion, in the early phase I sometimes found myself walking into situations in which my presence was awkward, made clear by a startled or disapproving glance by those in the room. It was Follian who continued to act as official gatekeeper. As time went on and my presence became familiar through frequent, regular visits, it seemed clear that people were becoming accustomed to my frequent presence and took less and less notice of my appearances and disappearances. Those who proved in the long run to be the most crucial key informants in the long run were *O Vertigo* secretary Faucher and company dancers Rodrigue and Demers.

The most difficult of all rapports to develop, as I quickly discovered during the pilot project at Jacob's Pillow, was with the audience itself during the public performance evenings in view of holding focus groups on the spot because there was so little time to approach them before the performance to convince them to join me at the end of the evening. As it turned out in every case, some spectators did fulfill their promise to me to attend the group, but others quickly disappeared after the performance, obliging me to pull new members into the focus groups just as the audience was exiting the theatre.

With some negotiation I gained access to the wings, dressing rooms and other backstage areas of theaters, but more easily than I expected to because of the technical directors' cooperation. I was also allowed to sit in on

staff and production meetings at *O Vertigo*. After becoming familiar with my project and its non-judgmental and non-critical objectives, most participants seemed even pleased to have me observing them and even eager to tell me their stories.

My last “official” day of fieldwork at the dance company studios was technically on March 7, 2002 when I came for a second and last interview with choreographer Laurin. I had really left the field in my mind after the Chicoutimi tour on November 3 and 4, 2001, but was also unable to resist doing additional fieldwork on October 12, 2002 during the reprise Montréal performance of *Luna*. And yes, I did feel the loss acutely, just as the methods guides had predicted. I had become deeply attached to the *O Vertigo* family and the process meditative observation, writing, and transcribing processes. Fieldwork with the *Luna* dance event proved to be an obsessive passion and structural element of my life for over two years.

### 3.6.3 Types of data and methods for data gathering

During the course of my fieldwork, the data I gathered took many forms. I made fieldnotes, recorded and transcribed in-depth interviews and focus group conversations, took photographic and videographic images, collected various kinds of documents from the dance company, and examined other researchers' studies and writings on *O Vertigo* and Ginette Laurin.

#### 3.6.3.4 Fieldnotes

I jotted notes with quick intensity, writing copiously and continuously by hand with pen and paper (see example in Appendix N) throughout every visit to the field. After some trial and error during the pilot project, I reserved

the use of a tape recorder only for formally scheduled interviews and focus groups in order to avoid ending up with a quantity of audiotape that I thought would be too large for me to transcribe and interpret with the time and resources at hand.

The fieldnote write-up (example in Appendix N) on computer was usually written up the morning after the fieldwork session, and the notes made in the field were augmented by still vivid headnotes (mental memories of field observations). Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) explained the process this way, "The ethnographer may not only make mental notes or 'headnotes' to include certain events in full fieldnotes, but he may also write down, in the form of jotting or scratch notes, abbreviated words and phrases to use later to construct full fieldnotes" (pp. 18-19). My fieldnotes tended towards complete sentences and full quotes, with occasionally fragmentary jottings.

I also kept a fieldnote log summary (Appendix C) of the date, time and main activity for each day's field session. It was eventually divided into seven chronological episodes: (a) first contact; (b) administrative planning; (c) summer rehearsals; (d) Jacob's Pillow; (e) creative process, CINARS showcase, Mercier residency, first Montréal performances; (f) summer workshop; (g) Chicoutimi tour. Included in fieldnotes were five types of observations written up in separate paragraphs for future coding requirements: (a) direct observations about the nature of the research settings and their inhabitants; (b) naturally occurring conversations and activities; (c) impromptu, unexpected chats with participants; (d) my own field notebook (personal reflections); and (e) analytical commentary.

My choices of what to record were informed by the research question about the nature and meaning of the event. The note-taking process was as open-ended and intuitive as it was rational, much in the spirit of what

Jorgensen (1980) termed "a logic of discovery" (p. 8)<sup>4</sup>.

One day during the pilot project, the intensity of my continual writing provoked *O Vertigo* dancer Demers to ask me what I could possibly be writing about all the time, what might be of interest as I watched them going about their ordinary activities as dancers. In response to her question I decided to offer a copy of my session-by-session fieldnote "write-ups" to the dancers in the kitchen of the *O Vertigo* studios, as an early form of member check. On the front of this copy of the fieldnote book I invited readers to offer their comments on blank sheets I inserted in between each page. I came across dancers Riede and Demers one day laughing and chatting as they read the fieldnote book, while dancer Weikart told me that he had deliberately avoided reading it because already too self-conscious about what he was doing. Riede and Demers told me that some of the other dancers had also taken to reading them and who eventually wrote responses into the book (see Riede's comments in Appendix N). Demers wrote about the way in which reading the fieldnotes had made her self-conscious of the effects of her behavior on others:

I haven't yet written anything but I have always followed the development of the fieldnotes. It's at once impressive and almost frightening that someone casts an anthropological eye on us. With each reading, I continue to ask myself why it is that this or that detail is so important and how it can enlighten an aspect of the thesis. On the other hand, reviewing the events of our lives even as they are unfolding gives me the awareness of two levels of reality at once, causing me to reflect on my actions. Sometimes I hadn't imagined the impact that a gesture or

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<sup>4</sup>Jorgensen (1989) advocates a research procedure which aims to build theories grounded in concrete human experiences. human realities...[and so] requires a flexible, open-ended process (1989).

something spoken could have on those around me and how that might be interpreted by someone who was observing them. (to be continued...) (Fieldnote comment written by Mélanie Demers, November 24, 2001)

#### 3.6.4.2 Focus groups

After attempting unsuccessfully to convince theater directors at Jacobs' Pillow to allow me to insert a questionnaire in audience programs during the pilot study<sup>5</sup>, I opted instead for a less ambitious and more qualitative method of gathering information about audiences. This entailed setting up small post-performance focus groups aimed at bringing together six to ten participants for a guided discussion immediately after each performance. I was looking for enough diversity (in age, dance experience, etc.) among focus group participants to create a wide span of points of view and demographics, and a group size that was small enough to allow individual participation in the conversations.

I soon realized that creating audience focus groups meant in practice finding a way to approach strangers as they waited in the lobby to enter the theater space. At each of the three performances in which I did fieldwork and organized the groups, I obtained a promise of participation from about twice as many people as showed up. But I managed to obtain my optimum target of six to 10 people of various ages and dance-going experiences by pulling in a few more people just as the audience was leaving the theater. All who participated in the focus groups agreed to be audio-recorded, fill out survey forms (Appendix E) named and quoted in future research dissemination.

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<sup>5</sup> The difficulties I encountered while attempting to do an audience survey during the pilot project included: (a) resistance and finally refusal of the public relations director to allow insertion of audience surveys into the program; (b) the impossibility of finding research assistants at the facility; and (c) the audience's tendency to leave quickly at the end of the performance for the drive to their summer cottages.



Four focus groups were organized with 22 participants in all: (a) on August 16, 2001 with ten dance workshop students; (b) on September 22 and 23, 2001, with six and seven audience participants respectively, who were attending *Luna* at the Monument-National; and (c) on November 3, 2001 with nine audience participants attending the *Luna* performance at the *Théâtre de Saguenay*. It proved challenging to convince spectators to commit more time at the theatre than they had originally scheduled into their evening. And gaining the cooperation of the performance managers in finding a private, quiet space for the groups seemed easy at first, but in actuality became problematic as previous agreements I made with them were neglected or broke down. But in the end, the advantage of this method, as promised by research methodology theorists, proved to be the lively character of the group conversations in which interaction among people created a dynamic exchange and generation of ideas. In their comments following the focus groups, those who attended remarked that the conversation had been a welcome chance to further socialize with other spectators and so to exchange their reactions to the performances.

At the beginning of the sessions I asked focus group members if they were be willing to fill out short survey sheets and that this was optional (see Appendix E). Everyone complied. In these questionnaires I asked them to write their name and to record their gender, age, vocation/work, current place of residence and whether urban, suburban or rural, approximate income, level of education and specialization, and how they would describe their ethnic/cultural identity. The last question proved difficult to pose in such a way that it would not offend anyone's cultural sensibility in these culture-sensitive times. The final question included two concepts: that of ethnicity and of the more ambiguous idea of "belonging to a cultural group." In formulating this phrase I was thinking of Royce's still resonant examination (1982) of ethnic identity, by which she means how and why people come to adhere to groups with shared styles, values and/or histories.

From these questionnaires I was able to compile and cross-reference data. Along with additional information gleaned through the focus group discussions, I constructed grids to summarize group members' characteristics (Tables 5.1.1 and 5.1.2). These compilations of characteristics contributed information that assisted me in the interpretation of members' dance views.

#### 3.6.4.3 In-depth interviews and casual conversations

Thirty-one semi-structured in-depth interviews (Appendix D) were tape-recorded with a wide range of participants. I searched for a balance between distanced and disinterested interview techniques and, as an insider to the dance world I was studying, came to favor the more interactive style I call "a conversation between colleagues" rather than a strict question-and-answer format with no discussion.

Several interviews were not pre-planned, but rather spontaneous occurrences that took place spontaneously in the heat of the action as unforeseen opportunities arose (e.g. with producers and audience members during the CINARS showcase event in the *O Vertigo* studios). These were usually of short duration, from 10 to 20 minutes, because of the time limits imposed by the situation. But the majority of the interviews were pre-arranged, and lasted from 30 to 90 minutes. I gave each interviewee as much time as they needed and desired to fully respond and to tell their story. There were also numerous casual conversations with participants, short exchanges that I tried to record in my fieldnotes as often as possible, as for instance an accidental moment that I found myself standing beside Laurin on the metro.

And one day when re-reading the interview coding I came upon a remark that sharpened my perception of the interviewing process. To my question about the meaning of art-making in his life, *Luna's* visual designer

Morgenthelar replied "I think [it is] because we don't want to be lonely." And then as an afterthought he uttered the fateful remark: "That's just another thing I just made up (he laughs, Dena laughs). I make up a lot of things when we talk!" (I-AM). I suddenly became conscious that each interview had been a kind of free-form story-telling session in which incidents were recounted spontaneously, on the spur of the moment. Positivist scientific precision and repeatability were not in question in this methodology. It became suddenly clear how true it is that this kind of research could only propose one set of stories and answers at any given moment.

#### 3.6.4.4 Photos, videoclips, CD ROM and other documents

I periodically took photos and made 15-second videoclips with a digital camera, and collected various kinds of documents and *Luna* artifacts. Photos were taken in the *O Vertigo* studios and offices and at their booth during CINARS, but not at performance occasions because of privacy issues and laws. The dance company also gave me a copy of the professionally made videotape of the *Luna* choreography, the official promotional photos and the press kit on paper and in the form of a CD ROM (Appendix R). There were also various kinds of documents collected in the field, sometimes in their original form and other times in photocopy: letters from students, choreographic notes, various lists and schedules, cue sheets, reviews and previews, grant applications and budgets, dancers' notes (detailed list in Appendix B).

### 3.6.4.5 Secondary textual sources

As discussed in Chapter II section 2.7, a wealth of writing and research was available and which portrayed choreographer Laurin within the socio-historical period in which she worked. These published materials took the form of: (a) monographies about Laurin, (b) histories that included Laurin and/or wrote about historical contexts for her work, (c) critical writing, interviews, newspaper reviews of *Luna*, and (d) sociological studies about audience attitudes and identities in *Luna's* dance world. Some of the authors and writers were integrated directly into the study as dance event participants in the role of expressive specialists, a notion developed further in Chapter V section 5.5.3. Others are referred to throughout the thesis as arts researchers whose findings have been integrated into the theoretical basis and in support of my own findings in this study.

### 3.7 Data write-up, coding and interpretation

Interview and focus group recordings, fieldnotes and texts from books and newspapers were systematically typed up in the form of a computer document with a future coding process in mind. In other words, I began thinking systematically from the onset in terms of organizing units of information into separate paragraphs that would later be tagged with code themes. As I typed up the fieldnotes, for instance, I thought in terms of keeping three kinds of writing in separate sections: (a) a journal of personal experiences and observation, (b) analytic commentary and (c) field observations.

During the first fieldwork period in the summer of 2000 with *O Vertigo*, I began the process of data interpretation by organizing a filing system for data logs and field notebooks. As fieldwork progressed, my own interpretive commentary became more and more predominant in

handwritten fieldnotes and particularly in their computer write-up. This led in time to the emergence and identification of themes, ideas and patterns that were later applied in the coding process. Analytic kinds of reflections, in the sense of dividing things into their constituent elements in order to examine them, eventually predominated in my manner of observing and taking fieldnotes.

The process of coding moved back-and-forth from computer operations to paper-and-pencil notations and mappings. The first stage was the most time-consuming and demanding, as I tagged each unit of information (paragraphs in this case) with one or several thematic code names. In the course of doing this, the node tree of themes and sub-themes began to take shape. After all data was coded, I made a print-out of each code theme separately on paper, which consolidated every entry throughout the data. Then I undertook close readings of the content of each thematic category, making notes in the margins of the paper to further reduce the quantity of data. These hand-written notes were then used as a basis to create mappings of ideas, themes and their relationships that formed the basis for the final write-up on computer again.

I chose the NUDIST software for qualitative analysis because of its compatibility with my MacIntosh computer, even though data analysis in this system is limited to organization in the form of a hierarchical "tree of themes" with main theme (parent) and sub-theme (child) nodes. This software also allowed for the making notes about the content of each node and its relationship to the others. NUDIST also permitted the creation of "free nodes" that needed not be positioned within the tree immediately but could be transferred there as necessary. The free floating nodes gave me crucial freedom to imagine themes that did not connect neatly to the whole scheme at first. Some were never integrated into the tree at all. The latter only became useful as the final document was being written.

I created three distinct coding schema for each of the three data types, each with its own index: (a) one for the interviews, (b) another for the fieldnotes, (c) and a third one for the focus groups (Appendix P). The choice of the main themes for the entire mass of data about the dance event (but not the research process), and eventual organization of Chapters II-VIII, followed Kealiinohomoku's structure: who, what, where, when and the two forms of why. The data also yielded information about the research process that was later developed into the sections and integrated into the content of this chapter.

I began the coding process with the audience focus group data, because although only 22 people were recorded in the conversations, it was the smallest mass of data to handle in view of a first coding experience. Three sub-sections were formed concerning the focus groups themselves, the first two included descriptive elements of the dance event and its activities. In the third sub-section, the four core questions were used as a template to organize the audience focus group nodes: (a) how they had made their first contact with dance, (b) why they continued to attend, (c) what meaning dance-going had brought to their lives and (d) the ways in which they had apprehended and interpreted the *Luna* performance. Certain themes arose unexpectedly as I progressed during the coding, about the lack of dance performances in smaller cities for instance (one which remained in the free node section).

As for the interviews, they were initially organized into 11 participant types (either individuals like the choreographer or groups as with the dancer), with second level subcategories concerning their role in the event, background in dance, how they were drawn into the dance work, meanings of the event in their lives, and meanings they ascribed to *Luna*. Twelve free nodes emerged from the content of the interviews (e.g. Québec arts politics, dance company culture, and the *métier* of dance).

In face of the complexity of fieldnote contents, I began by establishing three main "parent" first level themes: (a) data about the research process;



(b) the who/what/where of the event; and (c) the why or meaning. The notion of “what” finally referred both to “what kinds of activities happened” as the event progressed, but also to the choreographic level or “what were the dance movements.” The choreographic description itself was difficult to place in the logic of the final text, because several possibilities were evident. I eventually included it in Chapter IV in section 4.5 as the outcome of the creative process, but preceding the section on the moment of the performance. The subcategories of “child” themes mentioned briefly above arose directly from a close reading and notating of the data. Some of these nodes became evident while thinking through the research question and methods in an earlier period of the study (e.g. there would be two genres of meaning, there would be certain subcategories of participants included). And for the most part, the free nodes named earlier arose mainly out of analytic reflections recorded in my fieldnotes, and also while observing and conversing with participants (about the economics of dance and the dancers’ bodies for instance).

It was when each code category was finally printed out, pulling together all units of information about a single theme, that it was possible to see patterns and/or the range of viewpoints about each one. And in some cases, this happened only when the interviews, focus groups and fieldnotes yielded information about the same phenomenon (perceptions about dancers’ bodies or the interpretation of *Lund*’s themes for example).

In the end, I am certain that without the capacities of this software, I would have been unable to handle the sheer volume of data. The use of NUDIST not only enabled me to manage the mass of data but also to make subtle and detailed connections and relationships between the themes I chose that would have been far more difficult and time-consuming if attempted by hand.

Along with this coding process of the data from interviews, focus groups and fieldnotes, the artifacts and documents I collected in the field

served to both corroborate and to illustrate themes and ideas that had emerged about the *Luna* event (see detailed list in data summary, Appendix B). By way of example, ideas about the time and timing of the dance event that were recorded during fieldwork were further supported by a collection of company schedules and choreographic cue sheets (Appendix K). Another example is Laurin's two-page project proposal (along with the press release and program for *Luna*) that served as primary source material to show how her written ideas had been taken up in the writing of dance critics and even the spectators' views as expressed in focus groups.

This process demonstrates how the use of a computer software program has been complemented by a human ethnographic mind, and the way in which the researcher's intuition and intelligence intervened even within the "mechanical processes" of computer based analysis. The writing style of the final document is a mix of rigorously academic text that has been interspersed with the everyday language quotations excerpted from interviews and fieldnotes that are emotional, poetic and informal in their tone. The result is a heterogeneous, multi-tonal story, in the registers of many different voices of *Luna* participants, including my own.

### 3.8 Credibility and trustworthiness

How have I endeavored to create the conditions favorable to the conception of a story of the *Luna* event that was believable for the academic community? This ethnographic study has relied on several kinds of validity criteria to help establish trustworthiness, a tenuous enterprise at best in the case of qualitative, interpretive research.

It was the critical assessment of qualitative research methods discussed by Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2002), brought to my attention by co-thesis director Dr. Fortin, that served as a principal source material for this

section. In this text they reviewed contemporary debates about validity criteria for qualitative researchers and they proposed a particular paradigm for "assessing [...] methodological rigor and analytical defensibility" (p.28). In their proposal, they advocated for analytic openness by way of thorough public disclosure of the research process (p. 29). They placed particular emphasis on the detail and transparency with which procedures were undertaken, also important to me in the course of the *Luna* study, such as making known the details of how data was collected and interpreted and the precise way in which the researcher examined their own biases.

The criteria integrated into the research design of the *Luna* project and discussed below are: (a) awareness and revelation of researcher bias, (b) restricted and open forms of triangulation to create as complete a story as possible, and (c) prolonged fieldwork producing thick description (a Geertzian concept discussed further below) (Geertz, 1973, pp. 5-10) and (d) strategies for peer debriefing and respondent validation. In this chapter's conclusion, the integrity of certain elements and their relationship are further offered as proof of validity, and which Eisenhart and Howe (in Anfara, Brown and Mongione, 2002, p. 30) and Walsh (1998, p. 221) called "the fit or interaction between research questions, data collection procedures and analytic techniques."

### 3.8.1 Awareness and revelation of researcher's bias

Awareness of my own biases was ever the more difficult to locate because doing anthropology at home, and so after charting my own assumptions in the pre-fieldwork phase I kept them in view throughout the first phase of the study until they became internalized. This process of self-observation continued to develop, and I took care to continue recording new discoveries in fieldnotes. My own understanding of personal motivations and

frames of mind, along with the thought and circumstances that guided my choices and actions, were eventually written into Chapter I, the conclusion and at various points within the final text.

In terms of accounting for myself by opening my mind to my readers, as Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2002) have put it, I also inscribed into the final document thoughts and strategies about the way in which I searched for an effective balance between dance insider and field observer throughout the doing and the writing of the ethnography. I even included these kinds of phenomena in the coding process, e.g. the free node "ethnographer's presence" among the interview codes, and the coding themes named "interactions with participants" and "personal journal" (Appendix P). I even revealed to readers some of the awkward situations I found myself in and the dynamics of my own previous and current relationships with participants.

My engagement with self-reflexivity, in Seale's sense (1998) of reflecting on one's own actions and values during research, has been a continual motif. Self-reflexivity took several forms in this study, appearing throughout fieldnotes and the final document, intertwining my voice as narrator with those of participants. I inscribed myself into the text as a narrator when recounting my version of the event ("I"). At other times I appear as a doctoral candidate or as a dance event participant in my real-life role as dance programmer ("we"). But in order to avoid making authoritative claims for all dancers, I have carefully limited the use of an omnipresent voice ("one", "all of us"). The *Luna* study is one story of one dance event among many others that might have been and may yet be told.

### 3.8.2 Open and restricted triangulation

Triangulation methods in the *Luna* study included gathering data of several types, and also from a multitude of participants in several different environments and cities (Appendices B, C, and D). And so in this case they

involved both of the two genres that were distinguished by Van der Maren: restricted and open triangulation (2001) <sup>6</sup>.

In terms of the restricted variety, different types of data were collected. These pieces of evidence about the dance event, as Van der Maren likes to call them, were amassed through the various forms of data collection discussed above in section 3.6.3. And so the dance event, and sometimes even the very same phenomena, were described and interpreted through evidence from two or more data type sources. For example, the choreographer's aesthetic aims and preferences were discerned from the viewpoints of three different kinds of data: (a) by way of her own declarations in interviews; (b) from fieldnotes in which I recorded my observations of her giving notes to dancers in the studio; and (c) from the text of her project proposal.

The methods here also demonstrate open triangulation, which Van der Maren (2001) explained as that which "builds the most complete possible story" because the researcher gathers data in different situations and from different informants. As I followed the development of *Luna* and conversed with its participants, the study took me to a multitude of sites and cities. In the account of the performance itself, I observed the activities quite literally from two different angles: (a) a backstage wing and (b) seated in among the audience members. Dance event participants told the story of *Luna* from different perspectives, shaped by their unique backgrounds and roles. From this diverse collection of insider voices and their observed interactions I was able to build a story of *Luna* which, if never complete, offered a dense and complex account of the dance event from a wide array of perspectives.

In the end, the factual aspects of who, what, when and why of the dance event were the subject of consensus throughout. But differing kinds of

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<sup>6</sup> This information on Van der Maren's notion of restricted and open genres is based on class notes and from a personal conversation with him after his class on October 11, 2001.

data about the why (life meanings and performance interpretations) of the dance event yielded a varied range of subjective responses, what I have called “sites of consensus” that were charted in Figures 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4. There also appeared several dissenting voices or negative cases, among dancers, spectators and dance critics, who questioned the viability of *Luna*’s value and meaning.

### 3.8.3 Prolonged fieldwork and thick description

Also in support of the credibility and trustworthiness of this ethnography of *Luna* I offer the way in which I went about developing and writing the story through long-term fieldwork and description put into social context. These validity criteria are also part of traditional ethnographic methods, and were part of the research design for *Luna* at the onset.

Fieldwork for *Luna* involved relatively prolonged engagement and persistent observation, two of the validity criteria proposed by Creswell and Miller (in Anfara, Brown and Mangione, 2002, p. 29). I carried out fieldwork on a regular basis over a span of more than two years, following the dance event to various sites and places (Appendices B, C and D). During the creative process period I set up a fieldwork schedule of visits lasting from one to four hours on three afternoons a week and spent entire days in the field with the *O Vertigo*. And during some of my business and academic trips abroad, I sought out the chance to interview dance presenters of *Luna* from other cities.

Partly as a result of these long-term experiences in the field, I was able to develop a final document in which events and interactions were thickly described in Geertz’ sense of seeking the meaning of behaviors (his example was of someone winking) within the cultural contexts from which they take their meaning (1973, pp. 6-10). The dance movement from *Luna*



would certainly be perceived as a strange and even suspicious way of behaving if seen occurring outside of the context of a theatrical performance. Chapter IV is devoted to describing what happened during the *Luna* event, and this kind of contextualized descriptive writing became the principal literary device of *Luna's* ethnographic narrative in Part 2. Interspersed with my observations and insider knowledge are citations from participant interviews (dancers, technicians, audience members, etc.) about their own experiences and understandings of various phenomena during the performance. And Part 3 was in fact devoted to a classification and examination of the personal and social meanings participants ascribed to their involvement in the dance world.

#### 3.8.4 Strategies for peer debriefing and respondent validation

This research design included formal procedures, but I also seized informal occasions, to solicit reactions from participants and academic peers about the *Luna* research project at various stages of its progress. At the centerpiece of my efforts at respondent validation was the exposition of a photocopy of my fieldnote write-up book that I left in the kitchen of the *O Vertigo* studios. This idea suggested to me by dancer Demers and provided a chance for the *O Vertigo* dancers and staff to not only read my field reflections about them, but instigated many informal conversations with them about the research project and the kinds of things I was examining. A copy of the fieldnote book became one of my gifts to the company archives on leaving the field.

In view of respondent validation, I sent participants a copy of their transcribed interview and several offered further reflections on their original conversation (example in Appendix O). Eight copies were returned with only a few passages crossed out. Annotations sent back to me from the early

exploratory interviews with Rose and Demers in 1998 were especially insightful, with a gap of three years since the interviews had taken place. Some of their ideas about dance had shifted in the interim, a reminder of the mutability and ever-changing nature of human thought. The only person interviewed who objected at first to having the text of her interview exposed in this study was dance anthropologist Kealiinohomoku! At first reading of the transcript she feared having been inarticulate and unclear that day, but when we further discussed the ideas she proposed in the course of that interview and which I explained bore resonance for the *Luna* project, she finally relented and allowed me to quote and paraphrase her words. And I furthermore sent to choreographer Laurin the final copy of the sections I had written specifically about her to check for accuracy and authenticity, a request that she graciously accommodated. The opportunity also presented itself to have some of the other participants read sections about themselves in the final write-up (Szporer, Brody and Boucher). In consequence, they added a few touches and corrected several facts and spellings, but also let me know that what I had written was an accurate and satisfying portrayal of their thoughts and perceptions.

I also spoke frequently with my thesis directors and other expert dance researchers about my study throughout the entire process. It was from these informal sessions that many ideas were clarified and transformed (see acknowledgements). But two of these peer exchanges, with ethnochoreologist Chartrand and dance anthropologist Kealiinohomoku led to recorded interview sessions and so to data that was coded and interpreted for the final text. Kealiinohomoku also read the text of my exam project (an early version of the first three chapters), sending me her written comments. I also began talking about my study during discussion periods at meetings of artists, arts presenters and dance researchers that I attend regularly, which provoked further comments and questions and additional perspectives about the future pertinence of this kind of study for those groups.

### 3.9 Conclusion

Why was ethnography the most efficient way to investigate how and why the *Luna* event was carried out? How did the research question orient the research design, methodology and methods? Reviewing these relationships pulls components of this chapter into a symbiotic relationship.

My doctoral quest began when an urgent necessity arose to relocate the meaning of my own professional practice and so to renew my commitment. From long experience as a Montréal contemporary dance insider I already knew that there was no general agreement about the answer to why we dance the way we do, and that embedded in our contemporary art ethos was an inherent affinity for multiple interpretations and evaluations of artistic phenomena. With the lack of a common consensus, it seemed to me necessary to gather empirical, firsthand answers among practitioners. Parallel to these discoveries I began to realize that it was qualitative research methods, and ethnography in particular, that were likely to support this kind of quest, by way of fieldwork and face-to-face encounters.

As I proceeded to develop the research design, tensions were raging in the field of anthropology that I had to reconcile. My discovery of the dance event framework and Kealiihonomoku's axiom that all dances are ethnic (and so cultural artifacts) provided me with time-honored methodological bases in which to ground the study, as discussed in Chapter II. But at the same time the recent poststructuralist turn had also pulled the field of anthropology off into debates about the viability (and validity) of doing fieldwork, questions of self-reflexivity and considerations of ethnography as a literary form.

I finally situated myself as a postpositivist researcher, and realized that this methodology and contemporary dance practice shared a deep-rooted

belief in subjectivity. The final research design contained both elements of the classic fieldwork of dance anthropologists as well as integrating certain elements of the new thrust towards cultural and critical studies.

And so I laid out time-and-space parameters for the study, went out to do fieldwork, code and interpret the data much in the traditional way, as had many others before me. But this time the object of study was contemporary artistic dance events, one that had been relatively ignored by the field of dance anthropology. But my attitude as a researcher was also tempered by the current-day ethos of cultural studies researchers. I placed myself visibly inside the ethnographic field and text of a single dance event, one that I narrated along with a multitude of participants' voices. Once the data was meticulously coded and interpreted, the final write-up included the caution that this was only one subjective story of many that might be told.

This research design, methods and methodology produced a dense and complex story of *Luna* that has indeed answered in many ways, and on many levels, the question of what it meant for participants to engage in the dance event. It has also produced a wider dance event framework than before, one that I believe is well suited to the needs of contemporary dance ethnography.

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The original French texts

<sup>i</sup> "Depuis plusieurs années, en Amérique du Nord comme en Europe, il arrive que des polémiques éclatent sur l'art contemporain, sa légitimité, son intelligibilité ou tout simplement, sur la question «pourquoi en faire dans une société quasi entièrement déterminée par l'économisme et l'information.»

Rosemarie Arbour

<sup>ii</sup> " [...] parfois on ne savait pas que tu étais là, et puis 'Oups! Dena est là!' (Rires partagés). [...] On s'est habitué à ta présence. Ça faisait partie du processus. (Rires partagés.) Tu étais bien discrète aussi. On ne se censurait pas. [...] Tu faisais partie du processus, parce que je pense que tu ne réagissais pas non plus, et c'est bien. Tu ne devenais pas spectateur. Ça peut être mauvais que quelqu'un réagisse bien ou mal, parce que ça nous donne tout de suite des indices [...] J'arrivais à faire abstraction qu'il y avait quelqu'un dans le studio." Ginette Laurin

## PART 2

### A DESCRIPTIVE STORY OF THE *LUNA* EVENT



## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT HAPPENED: GOINGS ON AT THE *LUNA* EVENT

Is this the idea: that it has to be a clean slate, and you are a creative individual and you are inventing? [...] At a certain point this mythical person wants to make a work. That's probably day one [of the dance event]. (I-JK)

When discussing this project of contemporary dance ethnography in our interview, Kealiinohomoku mused that it might be the genesis of the choreographer's inspiration to create a new dance that set this kind of event into motion (I-JK). In the case of *Luna*, this moment proved difficult to pinpoint, because Laurin was continuously generating ideas for her future work, if dancer Rodrigue is to be believed (I-MR). And although there was an official last performance of *Luna* one night in Prague, an aftermath prolonged the effects of the dance performances for a period, impossible to yet determine, in the memories and writings of some dance participants.

What kinds of activities took place as the *Luna* dance event unfolded? In what manner and order did they occur? How was each episode related to the others and to the whole event? How did people behave and interact? In this chapter I will tell one of many possible stories of the goings on at the *Luna* event, based strongly on evidence from field observations but also on the ways in which participants behaved and how they spoke about them in interviews, supplemented by certain documents and images. This story is

also firmly grounded in my own experiences of having participated in countless dance events over several decades.

The time frame for the event itself extended beyond the time of actual fieldwork that took place from spring 2000 through winter 2003, and will be discussed in detail in Chapter VI. The dance event, for purposes of this study, began at the moment of Laurin's initial idea for *Luna*, included a pilot project in summer 2000, and continued through the project's imagined aftermath, with no final end insight. As fieldwork began, Laurin's initial choreographic ideas had already been written up in the form of a project proposal for a grant (Appendix I). I finally left the field officially after the second return performance of *Luna* in Montréal, but before the last "touring block." But I continued to seek out news about the touring, and collected the press clippings from those performances, until Rodrigue's email to me about the last performance of *Luna*.

The story of *Luna* below followed actions and interactions among the many kinds of event participants, who will be formally introduced in the next chapter. It included both ideological and physical activities recorded in fieldnotes and interviews. It also takes into account information from reports of things that happened which I didn't witness in person, but were described to me by participants who were there. This is a tale not only of the public performance of the *Luna* choreography, but also of how it came to be imagined, created, publicized, funded, toured, evaluated, documented, remembered and written up.

The phases of the *Luna* dance event and genres of activities will be examined as separately and chronologically as possible. But in actuality they formed a web of interrelated, overlapping and often simultaneous episodes. The complexity of their interrelatedness, and the difficulty of pinpointing their beginnings and endings from various perspectives, made it difficult to construct a schematic timeline. In order to provide a succinct summary of

activities, this chapter begins with a chronological calendar which points to the order of goings on and the approximate periods in which they occurred.

Some of the activities described here lay at the core of the *Luna* dance event's undertaking, others were on-going aspects of the dance company's operations, and still others were peripheral to the choreographic performance but part of the functioning of *O Vertigo's* company structure. There were goings on that were of limited duration and scope, and those that continued throughout the event of resounding importance to the outcome.

Essential to any dance ethnography, and placed here just after the section on *Luna's* creative process, is a descriptive analysis of the choreographic composition itself with its visual and aural *mise en scène*. The choreographic description begins necessarily with the problem of documentation and the immateriality of the dance performance, because *Luna* was an ephemeral event rather than a material object that remains. Some of the themes and elements (time, space and movement qualities) of the choreographic composition are elucidated, as well as significant features of the dancers' stage personas.

The first section of this chapter proposes an orderly calendar mapping out the time and place in which various activities occurred. What follows this calendar are descriptions of what people said and did during each of the phases of the *Luna* dance event.

#### 4.1 Activity calendar

As a point of reference for readers, here is a chronological activity calendar of the significant dates referred to in this chapter. Activities that were supplementary but not directly related to *Luna* are put in brackets. It provides a synthesis of the progression and relationship of *Luna*-centered activities, and other company activities that were not directly related to *Luna*, in the period of February 2000 through November 2003. It is important to

note that certain kinds of dance company activities remained on-going: board and staff meetings, the updating of press materials and contacts, the marketing efforts to sell *Luna* to presenters. Choreographer Laurin confirmed that “[...] generally our pieces have a cycle of three years duration. One year to create it – I am speaking here of the period with the dancers -- and two other years of presentation [of the work to audiences].”<sup>i</sup> (I-GL1).

#### 4.1.1 2000: First inspiration, creative process and planning period

Indeterminate date for original inspiration for the creation of *Luna*, but sometime during the creative process of previous work

[February-May: touring earlier works *En Dedans*, *Chagall* and the *Duos*]

April: three days of new media experiments for *Luna* with two dancers, technical director, choreographer and visual designer

March – June : period of initial planning for *Luna* by the directors and staff but without dancers; fundraising, communications planning, production of first promotional materials (press kit, website update)

[June 25-30: summer project to set *En Dedans* on a Brazilian dance company]

[August 1-15: period of rehearsals for Jacob’s Pillow performances]

August 16-19: residency and performances at Jacob’s Pillow; included initial work on *Luna* with composer Darden Smith

End of August- December 20: the creation of *Luna*’s choreography, set, lights, sound, costumes, and visuals; technical planning for tour

November 28-December 2: CINARS international arts marketplace in Montréal and studio showing for potential presenters of *Luna*

#### 4.1.2 2001: Further residencies, world premiere and first touring block

January 3-10: residency on the stage of the *Maison de la Culture Mercier*

January 13-30: residency on the stage of the *Luzern Theater*, Switzerland

February 2-17: residency and first performances of *Luna*, in Switzerland and Germany (*Luna's* premier was at *luzernertheater* on February 2)

March 1-3: filming of *Luna* in residency at the *Maison de la Culture Mercier*

[July: two summer commissions for Laurin with several dancers for a large pageant in Lac St-Jean and for the opening of the *Jeux de la Francophonie*]

August 2-25 : *O Vertigo* Summer Workshop in Montréal with international students and use of the *Luna* choreography in the pedagogy

#### 4.1.3 2001: Montréal premiere and second touring block

September 22, 23: 2 performances of *Luna* at the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*

October 2-7: performances of *Luna* in New York City at The Joyce Theater

October 23 and 24: performances of *Luna* in London, England

November 3 and 4: one performance in Chicoutimi, Québec at the *Théâtre du Saguenay*

#### 4.1.4 2001: Montréal premiere and second touring block

October 9-12: 2 reprise performances of *Luna* at the *Monument-National* in Montréal

February 19-March 5: Provincial tour to four cities in Québec with *La Danse Sur les Routes* project

March 15-April 8: Second European tour to six venues in Scotland, France, Switzerland and Hungary

#### 4.1.5 2003: "Last leg" of the *Luna* tour : second provincial tour in Québec, Western Canadian tour, tour to Mexico and South America, and third European tour

January and February: performances in six cities in Québec and three Western Canadian cities

March: three-week residency to remount segments of work in Mazatlan, Mexico as part of a long-term cultural exchange with the Delfos dance company; four performances of work in Mexico

April 5-May 4: performances in five cities in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina

June 2003: invitation for Laurin to create a new piece for a Mexican dance company

October 9-November 9: performances of *Luna* in five European cities in France, Italy and the Czech Republic

Nov. 9: last performance of *Luna* in Prague, Czech Republic

## 4.2 Envisioning a new choreography

I wasn't witness to the seminal moment when choreographer Ginette Laurin first imagined the dance that was later to be called *Luna*. One day she intimated to me that a new choreographic project really began "as soon as the other [previous] one [was] mounted onstage"<sup>ii</sup> (FN: 3-23-00). In our first interview, she gave this thought more precision when she said, "In fact, I don't know how it happens, but it's like I'm sitting there the evening of the premiere, I watch the performance and I say to myself 'my next piece is going



to be like this' " <sup>iii</sup> (I-GL). It was clear to me in context that she was referring to the freedom she felt at that moment to leave behind thoughts of the completed piece in order to concentrate on her next choreographic project.

But several weeks later long-time company dancer Rodrigue provided a further insight about even earlier possible points of origin, gleaned from her many years of close work with Laurin. She told me that "ideas for a new piece also emerge in short moments of inspiration during the creation of the previous piece [...]" (FN: 06-06-00). In Rodrigue's account (I-MR), Laurin assembled an inventory of ideas in her mind during her working processes and over time, for use in *Luna*.

In the case of a dance event like *Luna*, the entire project stems from the choreographer's envisioning of a dance, as *O Vertigo's* executive director confirmed when he said: " [...] it all starts with Ginette, even her ideas about using technology [...] I think it's Ginette's vision that we are trying to incarnate" (I-BL). The realization of Laurin's artistic vision for a dance is in fact one of the legal and artistic goals of the not-for-profit *O Vertigo* dance company. The tradition of making "new choreographic creations" is a defining characteristic of dance events like *Luna*, and places at the center of attention a unique dance presentation that is freshly conceived, inventive and even innovative. And so in order for the dance event preparation to begin, the choreographer needed to find inspirational ideas for the concept on which to base a future dance project that would one day become *Luna* <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It may also be possible to argue that in the case of *Luna*, as for many large-scale dance projects of its kind, that it was the coalition of dance programmers who commissioned (helped to finance) the new work who were responsible for instigating the dance event in the first place. But my argument would be that there remains the necessary existence of a choreographer who can be trusted by these programmers to find inspiration for a new work and so to produce a choreography that meets their standards, before they will make the initial investment.

### 4.3 Initial planning for *Luna*

This section will describe four kinds of activities, which in chronological terms, overlapped and impacted each one on the other. These activities were (a) the articulation of a initial project proposal for fund-raising purposes (along with a projected budget), (b) the identification of what kind of resources would be needed for this particular choreography, (c) meetings of the administrative staff and company directors to plan out the logistics and time line of the *Luna* project, and (d) conversations that choreographer Laurin had begun with an astrophysicist concerning the content of *Luna*. These descriptions of activities, like the others in Chapters IV through VI, are accounts that have been constructed from evidence that emerged from the data.

#### 4.3.1 The project proposal

A two-page proposal (Appendix I) signed by choreographer Laurin and visual designer Morgenthelar was written, to the best of Laurin's recollection, at least one and a half years before the opening night performance. The literary style of the text itself was poetic, philosophical and descriptive. It contained a set of ideas for the choreography, along with a short statement about the use of technical media along with a few illustrations of the technical paraphernalia. And according to the custom in Canada, the text along with its budget was read and assessed for eligibility and soundness by dance agent Line Lanthier from the provincial funding agency, the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec*, and by Monique Léger at the Dance Office of the federal funding agency, the Canada Council for the Arts. It was also reviewed and evaluated by juries of Laurin's artistic peers as part of the company's grant

application, which they were obliged to prepare for various government cultural departments (federal, provincial and municipal).

The project proposal articulated a conceptual text on which much of the subsequent writing about *Luna* was based, as will be further elaborated later in this document. It also provided executive director Lagacé and touring agent Menno Plukker with concepts and phrases about the nature of the work which Ménard finally inscribed into the press materials (Appendix I; Appendix R; CD ROM in Appendix S). They employed these materials in their initial touring prospections and negotiations with dance programmers and funding agents. The press kit on paper and CD ROM were also conceived for and distributed to dance journalists and critics.

In this project proposal Laurin affirmed her intention to undertake contemporary dance "research" in the academic sense of seeking to create new dance knowledge. She wrote that she would do this through a close study of "the moving body" (of the dancers), choreographic uses of new technologies, and by dialoguing with an interdisciplinary team of scientists and theoreticians. She also specified her aesthetic interest in creating dance that evoked the poetry and sensuality of these bodies in motion. An important thread throughout her text was a juxtaposition of scientific and humanistic perspectives. While Laurin proposed to render the body literally "larger than life[size]" by approaching it closely (in "close-ups") and isolating its parts like a camera might do, at the same time she would view "the human being [as] a landscape in which one proceeds to better distinguish fine details." And so paradoxically, while in her text the dancers are objectified as "moving bodies" whose parts were to be examined through optical lenses and cameras, these same entities were also "subjectified" as poetic and sensual beings whose physical contours were to be scrutinized as if a landscape.

#### 4.3.2 Identifying necessary resources

*Luna's* choreographic concept required more than the availability of the *O Vertigo* company dancers and studio space. New executive director Lagacé for the dance company was hired a year earlier in spring 2000 just at the moment when "Ginette was entering into this new creation [...and] it was already all planned and everything was set so that the creation could go." (I-BL). He explained that his task was to create the (business) plan for the project, find the necessary resources (for the creation and marketing of the work), balance an optimal budget (and its consequent revisions) and then seek the right financial partners in order to carry it out (I-BL).

It was evident from reading the proposal and budget summary (Appendix I) that the need for choreographic resources had already been identified in detail for *Luna*. For instance sound and visual media collaborators would need be hired, technological equipment and technical studios rented for their use, video projection surfaces and outsized optical lenses needed to be conceived and constructed. The cost of renting stage sound and lighting equipment for rehearsals and performances had to be anticipated. The dancers would be wearing special kinds of costumes to be designed and sewn, including those that would serve as video projection surfaces. And, of course, travel boxes had to be built specifically to transport all of these materials for touring that were sturdy and compact enough to travel on planes, boats and trucks to Europe and the U.S. (there were 20 travel boxes in the end). Just as I entered the field, grant applications for the *Luna* project had already been prepared and submitted for March and April 2000 deadlines of various national, provincial and municipal cultural funding agencies, to which responses would be given in June and July. Although not given full access to these applications, I know from my own experience of them that these forms required detailed preliminary estimates for all of the above salaries, fees, rentals and materials.

### 4.3.3 Planning meetings

At the same time, before choreographic exploration with the dancers had even begun for *Luna*, planning meetings were being held among *Luna*'s future artistic collaborators, the rehearsal and technical directors, the *O Vertigo* dancers, executive director and staff, and board of directors. These meetings were repeated periodically as needed throughout the dance event. Discussed at the particular encounters I observed<sup>2</sup> were various aspects of past, on-going and up-coming company projects.

The two office meetings I observed on March 23 and March 29, 2000 were facilitated by the company's executive director and included staff members (receptionist, publicist, administrator and technical director). Discussions at these two meetings covered the subjects of grant applications and press kits for *Luna*, contracts and negotiations with producers for performances of past company work, hiring of new staff, preparation for a board of directors' meeting, equipment rentals and returns, and the overall budget. It was here I learned that the impending board of director's meeting was expected to be a difficult one because of the demanding nature of its members, and so decided not to ask for access. I noted for instance that "Evelyn [Follian] is nervous, being told by Ginette that they [the board members] are very picky ("*pointilleux*")", but Bernard reassures her saying 'We'll hold up our end!' ("*On va tenir notre bout!*")" (FN: 3-29-00). A later interview with the board's founder Gosselin yielded more insight into the inner workings and demands of this group, and his function among them as the artists' advocate:

[...] the board is made up of people some of whom are more artistic, others from business, communications, and my function is

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<sup>2</sup> I sat in on three group meetings at the *O Vertigo* studios, but not the one-on-one discussions taking place in closed offices (and visible through large windows) because of their apparently private nature.

to assure that Ginette is artistically defended. Because in a board there can be a tendency sometimes to move to the side of business to make the company profitable – they cut three weeks of salary and put the dancers on unemployment, or cut the creation of choreography. <sup>iv</sup> (I-CG)

Yet another type of meeting was convened on August 1, 2000. This time dancers were called together by the rehearsal director in order to talk about rehearsals in August. This time Lagacé acted more as a mediator, giving information about schedules and the content of rehearsal sessions with dancers who made their thoughts and needs known. He reassured them that although the structure was already set up, revisions were always possible.

#### 4.3.4 Conversations with artistic collaborators and an astrophysicist

Laurin confirmed that during this early stage of preparation, before beginning rehearsals with the dancers, there were preliminary explorations of ideas and strategies for the new work taking place with her artistic collaborators for costumes, lights and visual media. For instance, conversations with the visual designer had already yielded a conceptual text about the use of large lenses and miniature video cameras, written in his own words and included as part of the project proposal (Appendix I). During the pilot project at Jacob's Pillow, the composer Darden Smith who was initially engaged for the project by *O Vertigo* (later fired by Laurin) showed me textual and symbolic descriptions of musical ideas for *Luna* in his notebook.

And because themes that arose in early rehearsals seemed to point towards aspects of the planets, Laurin sought out and began conversations with astrophysicist Claude Théoret to familiarize herself with recent research



in the field. She recalled why and how it was actually ideas arising from *Luna*'s scenic elements that led her to this encounter with Théoret:

[...] there came a moment in the studio with the dancers when a discovery occurred that there was a dimension coming close to the infinitely large, along with the idea of the creation of the universe. The planets were present probably because of the roundness of the stage elements and the optical techniques we were using, which were an ancient procedure that was used to discover how the planets functioned and how the universe was created. And so that brought us to consider that phenomenon, and so I decided to meet with an astrophysicist. <sup>v</sup> (I-GL2)

In the end, she was struck by the sense that she and Théoret were linked by their use of intuition and certain common interests. She told me that in consequence, they had resolved to continue their informal conversations into the next choreographic process.

#### 4.4 Giving form to the *Luna* choreography

The *Luna* choreography took shape during four tightly scheduled months, from the end of August to late in December 2000. But according to Laurin the creative process as a whole, including research on form and content, can last a full year:

[...] the creation period is long, and in itself a period that can take a year. Just to think [about the work], find sources of inspiration and become permeated with the subject. After that,

there is the production work, the search for collaborators, the creation of the scenic environment, the composer.<sup>vi</sup> (I-GL1)

The dancers prepared for their afternoon work sessions with the choreographer by attending various training classes and workshops of their own choice in the mornings, occasionally offered by and at the *O Vertigo* studios. Daily periods from noon to five, Monday through Friday, were scheduled for the creative process activities of movement invention and composition. These periods also included technical work on the new skills required by the choreography, the gradual integration of other artistic media along with stage scenery and props, opportunities for recuperation from the intensity of the physical and mental work, and note-giving sessions to correct errors in the choreography.

#### 4.4.1 Creative processes

Creative sessions for *Luna* began with the generation and development of dance movement "material" under the choreographer's strong direction. In Laurin's way of working, important contributions were also made by the dancers themselves, a dynamic which veteran *O Vertigo* dancer Rose described as "[...] trying to express yourself through this movement that's given to you, [and] that concentration on opening up the world of that dance" (I-DR). He teasingly called Laurin 'Miss Gesture' and spoke of her dance-making method as "tacking gesture onto gesture." Like Brisson, he spoke about the fast pace of the composition process: "At first she wants it fast, then add this, add that to a base." (I-DR)

Dancer Barry specified that the process for *Luna* was in fact an atypical one, because of a relatively new emphasis on creating "a presence," as she puts it, rather than developing a psychologically motivated "theatrical"

character as in past works she had danced with the company. She further described the creative work for *Luna* as cultivating “a state of being” that is all “part of one universe” (I-AB). Laurin herself explained to me the aesthetic philosophy and logistics of her way of working:

[...] I think that there are things that happen to us and we aren't conscious of the possibilities they offer us. [...] I am pretty precise about the theme I want to explore, but the way of doing it is quite open and leaves much room for the dancers. I am quite direct with the movement, but my way of integrating it into the situation is very Automatist. A little in the vein of the Automatist painters.<sup>vii</sup> (I-GL1)

And so although there is a traditionally authoritarian phase in the process in which she asks dancers to “do as I do,” she conscientiously gives them freedom to adapt and play with the movement, as will be seen in more detail below.

Her creative process periods ranged in duration from four months (as with *Luna*) to one year “according to the possibilities and what things are to be explored” as she explained (I-GL1). There were days when the choreographer's ideas and inspirations flowed easily and, as I noted, “there [was] hardly enough time to finish what they [were] after” (FN: 12-18-00). On other occasions, the process became more belabored for Laurin when fatigue set in or she experienced a lack of ideas. But the choreographer confided one day that the *Luna* creative sessions had been among the “most harmonious” to date. And technical director Jocelyn Proulx, a six-year veteran of the company concurred: “For me, this [*Luna*] creation, in the rehearsal studio, was done with an ease and gentleness that I had never before encountered [with *O Vertigo*]”<sup>viii</sup> (I-JP). Music or environmental sound was usually playing in the background as they worked, providing aural stimulation for

the creative processes. And in order to remember choreography as it was proposed and altered, movements sequences and sections were given little code names by the dancers like "*gestuelle secrete*" and "*sol des amoureux*" and recorded in personal dance notations by each artist (Appendices L and K). Described below, I have grouped the various creative strategies observed in the studio into three genres: (a) spontaneous movement generation, (b) game structures, and (c) movement construction.

(a) At certain times, Laurin stood beside one of the dancers and began to move spontaneously and intuitively in true Automatist fashion. In one of these moments I witnessed, I noted that it happened this way:

She concentrates quite simply and then makes a gesture, repeating it several times for the dancers to learn and follow. Rarely, but once in awhile, she discards a movement that she has made or alters it somewhat after making it. She does one movement, and then allows another one to happen. The dancers concentrate hard to grasp the movements on the spot [...]. (FN: 10-23-)

The rehearsal director later confirmed to me her commitment to the kind of intuitive spontaneity that was characteristic of "Automatist composition." He further explained that she begins this process with only general ideas about the space and dynamics of the movements she will be making, although she did tell me that she occasionally worked on some technicalities of the movements after they were created outside of rehearsal time (FN: 9-27-00). Every time Laurin created these spontaneous phrases, Brisson videotaped the sequence as she was doing it. It was then taken into the small studio where the dancer worked until it was memorized. Once the phrase was learned by heart, the dancer returned to the larger studio where Laurin submitted the spontaneously made dance sequence to modifications of its

shape, space, timing and energy. This Automatist process also intervened in creating some of the duet work. The way it functioned as Laurin created the duets, a visibly predominant feature of her choreography, was described in a detailed example by dancer Rodrigue:

[...] she tells us as if from a dream 'I'd like you to take the girl and have her fly behind your back.' And we have to find a way. She does give us the hold more or less, the way of taking the partner, and how she sees the person in the air [...] (and) we try to be Automatist, we try to find the most spontaneous way.<sup>ix</sup> (I-MR).

(b) Laurin also proposed game-like structures to her dancers in the form of problem-solving tasks. Here are several samples: a movement sequence was given to the taller dancers who were asked modify it by making it larger, and to the shorter ones to make smaller (FN: 9-06-00); dancers were given a short verbal text and given the task of fitting the words into an 8-count "pulse beat" (FN: 9-08-00); dancers improvised while guided by the image of "getting older as one progresses through space" (FN: 11-22-00). At one point Laurin gave movement phrases a call-and-response form, along with four variations of different dynamics that were to be invented by the dancers. Each variation was assigned an image such as "disco" or "slow motion" (FN: 9-22-00). Throughout these creative processes, dancers were asked to come forward with their own ideas and suggestions that Laurin consequently decided to integrate or leave aside.

(c) I also observed Laurin as she created sequences of movement by fitting them together tightly one after another with the attitude of a bricklayer, using previous and new material (FN: 10-02-00).

In our last interview, Laurin confirmed that the creative process I had observed for the creation of *Luna* was a typical one in terms of the kinds of

things that happened, much like all the others she had done. Even if she brought different aesthetic concepts and working processes to each choreographic project, the sequence remains largely the same: first she worked with her artistic collaborators to decide on the atmosphere and ambiance of the dance, then she began the work with the dancers and the stage elements chosen, each sequence leading her in chronological fashion to the next. There always came a time when the dancers were asked to implicate themselves creatively to finally take possession of the dancing and conceive of how they would interpret it for themselves. (I-GL2)

#### 4.4.2 Technical work

The dancers also worked intently on the technical challenges inherent in the unfamiliar new movements they were learning, often in the smaller studio in isolation from the choreographer. They observed, coached and encouraged each other in collegial fashion, like a community of teammates. The choreographer and rehearsal director looked in to make suggestions from time to time, but much of this responsibility was given over to the dancers. The ways in which they managed technical challenges and suggested solutions to the choreographer gave them the chance to make subtle but actual contributions to the aesthetic of the dance. As Barry specified: "The more that you can build [the movement] into the body, that interesting neurological process in which you can learn a movement and can tone and shade and color it at the same time, [the more that] the body absorbs those things" (I-AB). In other words, it is only when the body finally memorizes and naturalizes the movement configurations that she can begin to express its nuances.

Generally speaking, these types of technical activities required skills like the mastering of the mechanics of lifts and catches, adjusting the movement



to accommodate the cordless microphones and emitters attached to dancers' bodies, coordination of breath with movement, coordination of the spacing and timing, and the creation of transitions between movements. Rapid memorization of movements until they became naturalized, and the patience to drill sequences over and over, were also essential abilities required for *Luna's* dancers. And yet another kind of technical work was the achievement of particular expressive qualities requested by Laurin, which she called "the inner smile" and "cultivating the inner garden."

As the choreography became set, rehearsals of the finished sequences became routine but were carried out at varying energy levels. For instance, "working rehearsals" were those that allowed for stopping and starting the dance when needed in which the dancers moved at a relatively low energy level called "marking the dance". The "full out run-throughs" were rehearsals in which the dancers were asked to move with a performance level energy in mind.

#### 4.4.3 Integration of other artistic media

Lights, sound, spoken and sung texts, costumes, props and visual imagery were gradually added into the mix of the choreographic composition as the creative process progressed. The technology used in *Luna* was introduced relatively late in the creative process. Technical director Jocelyn Proulx questioned the lack of time made available for experimentation with the new media:

[...] the high technology of this show was very demanding as compared with past shows. [...] we didn't know what to do with this, there was no precise idea at the beginning. The most

interesting things were found towards the end. There was really no technical creative process parallel to the dance [creation]. \*

(I-JP)

There were two sets of costumes: a theatrical adaptation of everyday clothing (worn in two layers and so allowing for a change of costumes) during the dance) and the emblematic moon-like dresses that the women donned in the second half (photo 8). It was in February 2002 that finishing touches were finally made on the "everyday" costumes and stage make-up, during a two-week residency in Lucerne, Switzerland. Because the Swiss costumers at *Lucern Theater* were not used to the requirements of dance to allow for freedom of movement, the dancers complained that the resulting cuts and fits were stiff, and completely wrong. *Luna's* own costumers, one of whom flew overseas to join them, had to remake many of the pants, skirts and tank tops over again (FN: 3-1-00).

During the first few weeks of the creative sessions the transparent "scrim curtain" was hung in the large dance studio and the outsized optical lenses on stands were brought in to work with. Laurin knew from the outset that she would be using a scrim as both a barrier to divide the stage space into two choreographic zones, and as a screen for video projections. The optical lenses were used in three sequences in particular in which choreography was conceived that would be distorted as it was viewed through their frames (Appendix S and photo 7).

The other element that was present from the beginning and throughout this period was a sound score. Composed of "found" and collated sound, the ambient soundtrack created especially for *Luna* was introduced into the rehearsal process only after the movement was created (FN: 10-26-00). Since the sound element of *Luna* also included the dancers' voices, they were wired for amplified sound and danced with microphones and batteries attached to their bodies. The sound score also include spoken texts, both live and pre-

recorded. From the outset Laurin looked for phrases in books on astrology, photography and architecture. Dancer Weikart explained that these texts needed to be "not too narrative or evocative, more discrete, [and shouldn't] impose too much [but have] a musical sense" (FN: 9-15-00). Even as they danced, the dancers were also asked to make audible their breath sounds, recite texts and to count out loud in several languages. Sounds and movements were matched in specific but random configurations. And a complex process of recording sessions with Laurin and the dancers began in a sound studio, to be realized in several stages: the Hubert Reeves' scientific text about moonlight was recorded in English and in French, a session of trials was made with the words inserted in the "*les 21*" (the 29 sections of Luna are listed on the cue sheet in Appendix K), and the women's singing was pre-recorded to support their live singing (I-GL2).

In November, after three months of creative process, experiments finally began with video projections with various images brought in by the visual designer, and on different surfaces, the latter including the dancers' bare bodies. The scrim curtain and Barry's silky skirt, the latter expanded to its full volume as she was poised up on a pedestal, were eventually selected as projection surfaces. Small video cameras were also positioned underneath the half moon-like skirt of Barry to capture an otherwise hidden inside view of a duet being danced, and an image of her legs moving.

The white dresses were built to be longer than life-size in order to "ground" the image of the dancers in one section in which they would be carried aloft. They were reminiscent of Victorian style bell-shaped hoop skirts (and which also looked like a half moon), the kind without heavy crinolines because supported by a lightweight framework (photo 8). The designer settled on using the high-tech materials used by champion kite-flyers, because it was at once very light and thin (I-DL). When viewed onstage and from the audience, this fabric appeared to be like some kind of delicate silk billowing at the slightest touch or movement but was actually

more resistant than silk would have been to the wear-and-tear of theatrical performances. A few props were also integrated for the dancers to sit on or manipulate: little milking stools, a wide bench, some fire-producing material, and balls.

#### 4.4.4 Recuperation

The physical and mental intensity of these creative activities was balanced by allowing for recuperative activities to relieve the fatigue produced for the dancers (and other dance company members). Although these were informal or peripheral kinds of behaviors, they were regular and crucial occurrences throughout not only the creative process sessions but during all other phases of professional work time. These were evident in small micro-behaviors that were part of the everyday routines of dancers, and recuperative time periods were also officially incorporated into the company schedules and even into the choreography itself. Laurin was attentive to her dancers' capacities to produce work, and would regularly pause to ask them if they were able to keep on moving or if they needed a break.

Recuperative activities took various forms. At regular intervals, for instance, one group of dancers was given off-time while another group worked: "While Ginette works with a small group, the others are left free to chat or practice or even relax on the balls and mats" (FN: 10-2-00). Sometimes, for even if only for the briefest time, dancers would take advantage of little moments in which they could release tension: "[...] as soon as the dancers are not needed they move off to the side and do their own body work or practicing, even chatting with other dancers" (FN: 10-10-00). I also noted that the urgency and muscularity of the solos is tiring, tough and intense work and so each dancer finds small ways to release: a loud sound, a turn, shaking body parts (FN: 10-4-00). And yet another recuperative activity

I observed was simple sitting quietly in stillness during creative sessions (FN: 10-16-00).

Whether engaged in creative process, rehearsing or performing, these contemporary dancers were called on to continuously push the boundaries of their mental and physical stamina to the limit. Laurin, as many of them reiterated, was a very physical choreographer. And so it was that many forms of recuperative activities were built into the work process and performance to allow them to continue, to avoid injury and to gradually build up the necessary strength and concentration required by the choreography of *Luna*.

#### 4.4.5 Giving notes

Towards the end of nearly every creative work session and rehearsal in which there was a run-through of choreographic material, time was always allotted to the activity of "giving notes." This was the time when *O Vertigo* dancers sat down together with Laurin and Brisson to review details of the dancing with the aim of correcting perceived errors, technical problems and nuances of interpretation and motivation (see photos 12, 13, and 14). As an example of this note-giving kind of exchange with the dancers, here is the moment when Laurin began to clarify the visual focus, movement qualities and motivation (the rare moment when specific motivation was given) of five overlapping solos:

Ginette: "It's the same discourse you will [all] be making from the beginning to the ending, even when the dancer changes. You all have the same rhythm. There is something muscular. More accommodating. Feel the urgency. Tense and fast." Anne: "Do we all have the same idea? What is the focus [of the eyes]?"

Ginette: "For some of you, the sideways glance is not yet in the



right place. Look without turning your head. You are witnessing something. The same story, the same urgency." Mélanie: "We have all lived the same experience ..." <sup>xi</sup> (FN: 10-4-00)

As Laurin gave notes, she brought back to mind what she had seen during the previous 3 or 4 hours of work, with the help of a few brief jottings she had made. As she and Brisson spoke, the dancers sat spread out in a circle close by. The atmosphere was quiet and relaxed with daylight streaming in. Dancers responded to the notes usually by re-enacting the choreography in question in a new, corrected version. But they were otherwise stretching, lying down on the foam mats and balls, sitting in yoga postures, doing leg stretches and massaging each other (FN: 11-10-00).

I soon realized that these conversations were fertile opportunities to observe the dancers and artistic director at ease and conversing together as they clarified various aspects of the *Luna* choreography. It was there that the artists' aesthetic judgment came into play and the choreographic style of the dance was articulated with precision.

What the note-giving processes revealed specifically were the dynamics of Laurin's choreographic choices, her aesthetic preferences, the roles of each dancer in the group and in the dance. Choices were made during the note-giving sessions about what was "working or not working" in the movement, sequencing, timing, spatial orientation, and so on. The finest physical details and expressive qualities were reviewed and "corrected" to meet Laurin's satisfaction, even small things like the tilt of a head or height of a leg, or the "naturalness" in the flow of a certain motion or warmth expressed in a dancer's facial expression.

Dancers sometimes made suggestions or asked questions, but by-and-large it was Laurin who took the lead in decision-making. As will be frequently cited in the course of this study, Laurin infrequently went beyond technical instructions to the dancers to venture into matters of the meaning



and motivation of the choreographic movements. As she was an Automatist dance-maker dedicated to intuition, she preferred to allow the dancers as well to exercise their intuitive selves rather than pinning them down to a single interpretation. As she stated it, "There is always work in which the dancers must implicate themselves in a particular way. [...] Take possession, in the end, of their choreographic sections, see how they will interpret it. There is much place left to autonomy, in a certain way (I-GL2).<sup>xii</sup> "

#### 4.5 Dancing *Luna*

The dance movement, its staging and interpretation were at the epicenter of the *Luna* dance event. The following description of the dancing<sup>3</sup> is not an attempt to seize a single authoritative account of *Luna* nor to undertake a comprehensive choreographic analysis, but to capture in words some of its salient features. And because some aspects of the dance are already discussed in other parts of this document, this section is intended to focus on the dancing and as a complement to the other writings. To enliven the reading of the following, there are videographic excerpts of several sections of *Luna* on the CD ROM (Appendix S).

The descriptions and interpretations in this section were culled from my own and other's observations of how the dancers danced at various times. Five key aspects of the choreography will be discussed below: (a) general themes and structure of the dance, (b) dancers' physical attributes and stage persona as evidenced in performance, (c) quantity and quality of the choreographic movements, (d) structural characteristics of the composition, (e) the mise en scène the elements of video imagery, lighting, sound and costume design.

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<sup>3</sup> Descriptive passages about the choreography in my fieldnotes were written in three literary genres: my own everyday jargon, the terminology of Laban Movement Analysis and metaphoric imagery.

#### 4.5.1 Themes and structure

Artistic collaborator Morgenthelar discussed the way in which he understood how themes function in the medium of dance:

Well...I think in dance in general, I have to go a bit farther, because we are not talking about having a script [where] everybody reads the same text, we can talk about it. I'm in a physical space, it's all very abstract, and I think that's something that goes much larger than just one company. Then it becomes more of a balance of how people express their ideas within that field. Because, it's so large, you can have a theme, but you can have it from so many different angles. There's very little boundaries that you have. (I-AM)

In reference to the thematic content of *Luna*, the initial project proposal Laurin and Morgenthelar (Appendix I) wrote generally that they intended *Luna* be a kind of poetic meeting between a scientific study of the human body/mind and an artistic use of scientific lore about the moon and new video technologies. But as Morgenthelar explained in the above excerpt, and in the abstract manner of contemporary artists, the themes proposed for *Luna* became a site for the expression of the ideas of the choreographer and her artistic collaborators. And in the framework of this study, I would include as well that ideas were projected into and onto the work by the other kinds of event participants as well.

During a studio rehearsal one day, I noted the way in which Laurin's choreography functioned this way, that is on multiple levels of meaning, when observing Riede and Lamothe working on a floor bound, rolling duet. The duo was intimate in the sense of being sensual, even reminiscent of lovemaking. But the movement was abstracted enough to suggest other

interpretations as well, for instance vigorous play, a formal study of momentum, an intricate interweaving design of bodies, or even fighting (FN: 11-15-00).

The title *Luna*, chosen in the later half of the creative process, emerged as a predominant theme and metaphor in the mind of choreographer, spectators and dance writers. To this purpose, scientific and poetic images about lunar phenomena were evoked through the choreography, costumes, sound, images and scenic elements. It was also evident (to my mind and that of spectators and dance writers in this study) that *Luna's* inhabitants were not merely generic "dancing bodies" whose physiology was scrutinized as if a microscopic sample. They also interacted passionately and tenderly, emitted expressive vocal sounds, whispered secrets to each other and spoke to spectators with urgency. Although this was an abstract work that held no single authoritative, linear or literal narratives, the dancers were clearly engaged in fleeting moments of emotionally charged relationships of some kind. In other words, with the creation of *Luna*, Laurin had envisioned for her audiences an imaginary community of dancers that was at once playful, mysterious, humanistic, at times spiritual, and apparently "magically" transformed (by technological means).

As Sklar (2001) proposed, from her perspective as a dance anthropologist, "Sensory perceptions are molded by cultural epistemologies; abstract conceptualizations refer to culturally specific sensory orderings. All our actions in the world are at the same time interpretations of the world" (p. 4). Embedded in the themes and style of *Luna* was a contemporary discourse on the interface between science, art and humanity. Much more will be said about themes and their interpretation in the next two chapters on meaning.

#### 4.5.2 Dancers' physical attributes and stage persona

The nine dancers who performed in *Luna* were chosen by Laurin (as are all her dancers) in view of creating a heterogeneous mix of physical attributes, movement trainings and qualities. Among the *Luna* dancers there were people of both sexes (a nearly equal number of men and women), several visible nationalities and ethnicities, varied backgrounds in movement training and so movement qualities, and different body types. Touring agent Plukker (FN: 12-1-00), biographer Barras (1995) and Laurin herself (I-GL2) confirmed the importance of this company ethos promoting a varied representation of the human form and personality. In his biography of Laurin (1995), Barras used the metaphor of a paint box with a wide range of colors to explain her inclination towards human pluralism, while Plukker admired what he felt was Laurin's political commitment to multiculturalism.

The *O Vertigo* dancers cultivated a trademark performance attitude, a particular facial expression that was taught to them by the choreographer during the creative process. Laurin called this "the inner smile" and described it as "[...] a warm grin that seems to emanate from a feeling of pleasure in the dancing" (FN: 8-9-00). This kind of upwards turn to the corners of the mouth caused *Luna* inhabitants to appear as emotional people who were warm, playful and seekers of sensual pleasures. The dancers were directed by Laurin to mask the effort of their dancing, to appear as if floating as they moved or were lifted upwards. In *Luna*'s dance world of effortlessness, pleasure and sensuality, pain and violence were nearly absent.

#### 4.5.3 Quantity and quality of movements

[Laurin] moulds sensual landscapes from the human body. In a dynamic succession of choreographic sequences, the nine

dancers are, in turn, matter and substratum, swept up in the flow of movements through a refined and complex gestural vocabulary. (Excerpt from [www.overtigo.com](http://www.overtigo.com), April 8, 2002)

As the company publicist confirmed on *Luna's* website and in the press release, Laurin was a prolific movement inventor with an affection for complexity, sensuality and a driving fluidity. *Luna* was a world in nearly continuous motion with sparse moments of stillness, suspended action or even the slow motion of sustainment (see video excerpts in Appendix R).

*Luna* in fact contained a large quantity of diverse actions that were so prolific that movements seldom seemed to be repeated twice. Descriptive passages about the choreography in my fieldnotes were written in three literary genres: my own everyday jargon, the terminology of Laban Movement Analysis and metaphoric imagery. To give but a small sampling from fieldnotes of the variety and type of movements: "Movements are leaning, catching, jumping, shaking" (FN: 10-11-00); "Actions are rolling, twisting, balancing, flailing and flopping, pulling down, agitated rocking" (FN: 10-16-00); "Actions are lifting, jumps, tremors, leaps and more [...]" Bodies floating and suspended in the air, getting thrown, shaken, caressed" (FN: 11-1-00). Each of the above action series describes a single movement phrase!

As well as full-bodied movements, I noted (particularly in solos) a proliferation of small hand and head gestures close to the body (Appendix S, video sequence of Rodrigue, Demers and Long). They suggested a kind of impressionistic story telling or animated sign language. Dancer's eye focus was usually directed outwards towards the audience, but occasionally toward fellow dancers.

As the choreography progressed, and on a daily basis, Laurin gave detailed notes to the dancers that specified very particular ways of doing the movement and occasionally advanced images that served to clarify the

motivation and so the quality of certain movement phrases. It was during these note-giving sessions that I heard her voice with certainty her aesthetic preferences. Culled from a sampling of notes given to the dancers (FN: 20, 22, 25, 27-10-00 and 8,10-11-00) these are some of Laurin's recurrent aesthetic preferences, expressed in her own words: clarity, "clean" and precise timings and gestures, sharp (timing), fluid and smooth, seamlessly linked together (movements), synchronicity of timing and body shapes (unison), getting the movement integrated deeply into the dancers' bodies, emotionally moving, more delicate than "raw", and moving with "controlled risk." It is no wonder that the dance specialists tended to speak of Laurin's work as well structured and precise.

Within each section of the choreography fleeting dance phrases moved by quickly, often lasting only a few seconds (as if a metaphor for urban life). The quality of quickness was in fact prominent, and there was also a propensity for the airborne. But the actual technical difficulty of *Luna's* relentless movement and the considerable physical efforts of the performers were masked by the quality of lightness (and the gentle "inner smile" on the face of the dancers), giving much of the dance a floating quality as if in a dreamscape.

#### 4.5.4 Structure of the composition

*Luna* was danced in a continuous stream of motion without pause that lasted for over 75 minutes. The structure of the dancing itself was a dense collage of distinct although seamless sections with overlapping transitions. The performance area was divided into a narrow upstage background area and downstage foreground area by the scrim curtain, defining two separate sites for stage action. Complex, ever-shifting spatial configurations of shapings, pathways and zones brought to mind the dynamics of kaleidoscopic



images. Distinct sections of various lengths, listed on the cue sheet (Appendix K), and the quantity of dancers were framed by dancers' exits and entrances into the side wings. The intimate one-on-one partnering of duets was clearly a predominant form for Laurin's explorations of human relationships. But there were also sections devoted to solos, trios, full company dancing and all other possible combinations of the nine dancers.

#### 4.5.5 Mise en scène : video imagery, lighting, sound and costume design

Each kind of media introduced into the choreographic composition of *Luna* accentuated and heightened certain effects and themes of the dancing, increasing the density of choreographic content by adding more and more sensorial stimulation and conceptual propositions.

There were several kinds of scenic devices and visual media layered into the work, described in more detail in other parts of this document. For instance, during the second half of the dance, miniature video cameras and large optical lenses on stands (Photo 7, Appendix S video sequences and photos) were integrated, serving to frame, amplify and otherwise distort parts of the dancers' bodies and movements in close-up detail and "real time" (i.e. live). Video images were projected onto and from underneath Barry's skirt as well at various points, and others were created for a sequence close to the end and projected high up on the scrim: those of the dancers' faces moving expressively, looking as if free-floating in space and strangely distorted by the optical lenses.

The sound environment was composed of alternating classical and contemporary musical genres, drawing its sounds from several different historical periods<sup>4</sup> (Appendix S video sequences). The human voice was also

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<sup>4</sup> The music sources were the works of composers Peter Scherer, Karl Friedrich Abel, Johannes Schenck, Main Marais, Tobias Hume, Vladislav Delay, Terre Thaelitz, Lithops, SND, t. Brinkmann, Noto, David Cunningham, Neina, and the Anonymous ensemble.

featured both prerecorded, and live. “Spoken word” media included counting, phrases invented by the dancers, excerpts from science journals, song lyrics, but also monologues that were mouthed but not sounded (speech with no sound). Dancers sang, used several Euro-American languages and Latin, whispered and marked time with a breathy sound poetry, at times appearing like some dancing chamber choir with a repertoire of non-sense sounds and words.

The first set of costumes was composed of two layers: everyday tops, pants and skirts with sculptural cuts. The first outerwear outfits were colored in taupes and beiges, and later removed revealing under layers (but not underwear!) of closer-cut garments in shades of red, green and blue. And finally, *Luna* will be long remembered for the huge white silky dresses billowing on their outsized Victorian crinoline frames like liquid half-moons (Photo 8, Appendix S video sequences and photos): “The effect is particularly fantastic, I found, when the women are lifted into the air and their lower body seems to get longer and the skirts larger as they fly aloft” (FN: 12-15-00).

The dance floor prepared for *Luna* was black with a marbled pattern of white, blue and purple splotches and streaks painted on and, as did the other stage elements, enhanced the thematic effect of the stage space as outer space – the sense that *Luna* took place somewhere out among the planets and stars. This colorful texturing of the standard back dance flooring was the lighting designer’s response to the challenge of a black light-absorbing surface, as he put it, “[...] in dance, the dance floor, it’s always black, it’s always ugly, a black dance floor with tape. So it’s a bad canvas for light” (I-AM).

#### 4.6 Managing *Luna*

The initial planning activities described above moved into full-time project management for the *O Vertigo* staff as the time came when the creative work for *Luna* began with the dancers. These activities continued throughout the entire creative and touring periods. The general director along with his staff began to supervise the numerous tasks involved in the conception and realization of marketing and promotional plans and administrative system in support of the *Luna* project. Of the 1.3\$ million operating budget, about

In a project budget specifically for the needs of creating and presenting *Luna* (Appendix M), 70, 000\$ was set aside. On a continuous basis, the general director needed to complete grant applications and negotiate contracts with dancers, collaborators, landlord, filmmaker, programmers and producers. Statistics on audience attendance had to be compiled for funders, press articles were translated, private showings of the work for interested programmers were organized, the press kit up-dated, and so on. During the two-year period I spent with *O Vertigo* in the field, most of the office staff and several of the dancers were hired by him to replace outgoing company employees.

To recapitulate briefly, supplementary company projects were being managed at the same time as the *Luna* project: a dance workshop, other creation commissions and tours of past work, remounting of older work on other dance companies and plans to move the company to a new space. Generating and maintaining diverse company activities was part of Laurin's fundamental plan to assure the viability and continuity of her company and dancers:

The more activities that the company has, the bigger the annual budget and the more we can allocate money to creation

and keep the dancers working longer. This generates profits, and for me the continuity is very important. I can't work project to project, that is to hire dancers for 20 weeks, do the creation, and then say 'see you in 30 or 20 weeks.' I have a lot of difficulty in working that way. It's certainly more difficult to maintain a team during 40 weeks, financially it's very demanding. But for me to maintain the aspect of continuity, the aspect of having a group that is very solid and that works together for a long period, is very important. <sup>xiii</sup> (I-GL1)

Publicity and promotional materials for *Luna* were conceived even while the dance was being created: posters (photo 10), flyers (photos 10 and 11), paper and electronic press kit (Appendix S), an announcement in the company newsletter, a new section on the *O Vertigo* website. The photograph of dancer Anne Barry, in which she stood poised upon a pedestal that was hidden by her silk hoop dress, became one of *Luna*'s emblematic poster images, "[...] the magic effect of seeing Anne's body as if it is floating in space, suspended and unsupported" (FN: 10-26-00). It reappeared on press releases, website and frequently also in the newspapers (photo 10), as did later a photograph of Riede moving behind one of the optical lenses. The "hard copy" press kit folder was an elegant deep green with copper colored lettering: testimony to a substantial budget allotted to creating promotional materials that fully represented the aesthetic beauty and prestige of *O Vertigo*. *Luna*'s CD ROM dossier (Appendix S) included texts about the company, the work, and press excerpts, but added embedded video clips of the artists talking and the choreography in motion.

In the middle of the creative process, *O Vertigo*'s touring agent Menno Plukker set up a promotional booth for the company at the CINARS international arts marketplace event. This biannual trade fair of buyer and sellers of live performances was held in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel ballroom

in downtown Montréal from November 28- December 2, 2000 (photo 17). From their vantage point at the booth, *O Vertigo's* agent and general manager were able to attract 60 contemporary dance presenters to the *O Vertigo* studios one afternoon, to meet Laurin and watch excerpts from the new work-in progress (photo 18 and FN: 12-1-00). Building relationships with potential and past dance presenters are an on-going activity for the general director and touring agent. And once an offer is made, the work of budgeting, fundraising, and tour planning has just begun.

#### 4.7 Documenting *Luna*

More than either theater or music, choreographies are ephemeral phenomena, because in practice they are rarely captured on paper, and never in the comprehensive manner of a dramaturgical script or musical score. And so a concrete record of *Luna* was created that might be filed in an archive or passed on to other dance companies so that they might later reinterpret it<sup>5</sup>. The dance was conceived and "set" by the choreographer on the bodies and in the minds of her dancers. With her Automatist ethos that values spontaneous intuition, choreographer Laurin didn't in fact compose on paper at all. Although over thirty dance notation genres exist as well as a common practice of inventing personal short hands for movement, no attempt was made by the *O Vertigo* dance company to create some kind of notated score as *Luna's* permanent record.

But what kinds of material records of *Luna* do remain, however partial? During the period of creative process, several kinds of written traces and visual images of the dancing were made by various artistic participants. There were fragmented choreographic notes taken during the creative

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<sup>5</sup> The possibility of creating a written score by an expert dance notator does exist for these kinds of dances. But it is a rare occurrence, and in the end only a partial (and somewhat subjective) record of the finished choreography. In practice, remounting a dance from such a score usually requires the direction of a dancer who has had a personal experience of the choreography.

process period, written in various manners by the dancers, the choreographer and rehearsal director, and their artistic collaborators. And dance writers and presenters took notes about the dance even as they sat in the dark. Associate director of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*, Diane Boucher offered an explicit description and sample of her documentation techniques (Appendix J):

I drew the stage setting with little stick figures and a little stage plan, and what was on the stage. I have many of these little notebooks at my house. I make a drawing [...] and afterwards I always write about the same things: number of dancers, structure, decors, costumes. [These are] little points which allow me, as years go by, to remember what the piece was like. [...] The last few years, [...] I wrote little notes in the programs, things that occurred to me (as I watched) <sup>xiv</sup>  
(I-DB)

As Boucher explained, these kinds of notes were intended to supplement the memory of the choreography.

Other kinds of written records include descriptive accounts of the *Luna* choreography that were permanently recorded and published by way of the texts written by critics and journalists who attended a performance. The choreographer, rehearsal and technical directors conceived an outline of the piece, a 'cue sheet', for practical purposes. This grid records the code names of each section of *Luna* (named by dancers and rehearsal director to give them a common language) in chronological order along with their respective durations (Appendix K). Along with this cue sheet, the publicity materials with information about the artists and choreography, described in the previous section – posters, press kits, etc. – were also among the permanently archived artifacts of the performance.



There was a film made of the *Luna* choreography, conceived by dance filmmaker Lisa Cochrane and financed by the dance company for promotional purposes in March 2001, soon after opening night. From the dancers' point of view this filming was the permanent record that would remain long after *Luna's* performances were over, as dancer Gould remarked when I asked him 'if it felt like a show', "Worse! It's for the cameras. For posterity's sake!" (FN: 3-3-01). In making this film, *Luna* was danced twice in front of three cameras positioned at different angles. It was later edited to appear as if a single on-going performance in continuous real time. Even though the film provides a true-to-life visual and aural reproduction of the entire work from beginning to end, it does so necessarily from selective and partial angles of view. It provided a record of only one day's performance of *Luna*, early in its development and in a theater that was cramped in terms of the stage space necessary to accommodate its set and costumes. And as filmmaker Cochrane confessed to me that day, with two chances to shoot the piece, "It's the most stressful thing I've ever done. Three cameras! You miss it and it's gone." (FN: 3-3-01). Cochrane was confirming that the eye of even three cameras at once could not "see" everything.

#### 4.8 Teaching *Luna*

The dancers taught sequences from the *Luna* choreography to workshop students as the company toured (in Chicoutimi for example), to incoming company members as older company members left or took temporary leave of absence (I watched Rose coaching Nguyen), and to hopeful candidates at the company auditions (on September 16, 2000). And most significantly, in summer 2001 *Luna* "repertory" was taught to a large international gathering of professional dancers and dance students in the fourth annual *O Vertigo* Summer Workshop.

Students came from around the world to this summer workshop that took place over three weeks in the studios of the Dance Department of the *Université du Québec à Montréal* from August 5-25, 2001 (Appendix P). After speaking with a dozen or more students informally and in a focus group one day, it became clear that many had come because they had attended a performance of *O Vertigo* as they toured to their home city, and loved the company's work.

The workshop was at once a way of helping to finance the company, to offer *O Vertigo* dancers three extra weeks of employment, and to scout for potential new dancers. Dancer Riede from the cast of *Luna* is herself a past workshop student who was invited to join the dance from her exposure to Laurin during a previous workshop like this one, and not during an audition.

The schedule was dense with classes, "an intensive," with several different activity blocks each day. The students were divided into groups of 10 to 12, and assigned one or two teachers per block: (a) technique classes; (b) "body work" (e.g. Contact Improvisation, Aikido, Body Mind Centering®, and others); (c) a repertory class integrating *Luna* choreography and leading to a public performance; and (d) a video showing and lecture-demonstrations of company work. And so it was that once created, the *Luna* choreography became part of the *O Vertigo* "repertory" and was used as a pedagogical tool, among other things.

On August 8 and 10, 2000 during the summer workshop, I observed dancers Anne Barry and Chi Long teaching dance material from *Luna* to twelve students. They "taught the moves", as they put it, by pulling apart movements and phrases into discrete components, and reconstructing them again bit by bit for the students to learn. They explained and analyzed the movement in many ways, among others by naming things and proposing qualitative images to provide motivation, for instance: Anne asked them to move "from tender to wild"; Chi coaxed them with "lighter, more like a game, think of the wonderment of the other person!" They discussed specific

details with students, explained Laurin's integration of audible breath sounds and "the inner smile," and corrected the students' right and wrong interpretations. The aim seemed to be get the students' dancing to look as much as possible like the original, that is like "the Chi person and the Anne person." (FN: 8-8-01 and 8-10-01)

In this way, the summer workshops were occasions for professional dancers from around the world to have closer contact with the *O Vertigo* aesthetic, and for company dancers and the choreographer to re-examine the choreography minutely. Laurin remarked, "[...] even the summer workshop is a way of creating " <sup>xv</sup> (I-GL1). I also realized that as the dancer-teachers searched to articulate and explain *Luna's* aesthetic for others to learn, they revealed glimmers of their own understanding of the movement.

#### 4.9 Presenting the performances

All of the creative processes, planning meetings, grant applications and other preparatory and auxiliary activities described above anticipated the dance event's core moment. This is, of course, when an audience would be brought in to experience a performance of the finished choreography. During these public presentations all of the hard work came to fruition and the entire enterprise came to have meaning as a performing art and social occasion. And this is the moment when the dance reaches its potential as a theatrical experience, as dancer Chi Long exclaimed, "[...] you do it over and over again in the studio. But to do it in a theatre with strangers out there, and...just the adrenaline rush! So [the performance] goes to a 'new place' after the first show 'cause you realize where it can go when it's pushed. It can only be pushed this way when you're doing a show" (I-CL).

During my fieldwork I observed four performances of *Luna*, three in Montreal and one in Chicoutimi theatres, from both backstage and audience

vantage points. I also interviewed the dancers, dance presenters and reviewed media reports from performances that occurred during the first European tour and the New York City showing, gleaning more information about other presentations that had taken place. The following description portrays the activities common to all these *Luna* performances but also include some of their unique characteristics and variants as well as and examples of specific occurrences that happened on particular nights.

#### 4.9.1 Preparing for the performance and closing up afterwards

Preceding each of the public performances, the presenting organizations<sup>6</sup> had already spent several months in preparation. In parallel with *O Vertigo's* staff, the local host theater staff (along with the presenter in case they were not the same organization) negotiated contracts, secured housing, organized auxiliary activities (workshops, receptions, interviews, etc.), undertook a publicity campaign, and pre-sold some of the tickets for the upcoming performances of *Luna*.

Just prior to the arrival of the dance company at the theater space, the technical crew of the host theater, in cooperation with the technical director and technical staff of *O Vertigo*, had already finished the basic technical set-up for the *Luna* performance. Because of the high cost in mounting large-scale performances like *Luna*, this was often done quickly in a single day or less. The stage crew began by unloading the 20 travel boxes full of props, costumes and technical equipment. Among the tasks they accomplished were: hanging and focusing the lights according to the plot for the lighting design, wiring up the sound and video systems, hanging the scrim curtain, laying down the

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<sup>6</sup> *Luzerntanz* at *luzernertheater* in Lucerne, Switzerland on February 2 & 3, and 9 & 10, 2001; *Tanzhaus Die Werkstatt* in Düsseldorf, Germany on February 16 & 17, 2001; the *Festival international de nouvelle danse* at the *Monument-National* in Montréal, Québec on September 22 and 23, 2001; the *Joyce Theater* in New York City, USA from October 2-7, 2001; and a reprise Montréal performance produced by the festival again at the *Monument-National* from October 9-12, 2002.

special dance floor, and getting the moon dress costumes ready backstage for a quick change.

As for the dancers, the afternoon before the evening performances were reserved for the dancers to adapt their movements to the new stage in a "spacing" rehearsal. They also engaged in a personal "warming up" routine for mind and body. For instance at the *Auditorium Dufour*: Riede massages her feet, Rodrigue sits and makes circles with her body in the air, Patrick lies on his back fully resting, Anne does sitting stretches (FN: 11-3-01). They later took time to dance the choreography full out in a "dress" rehearsal before the audience arrived (on the first night only when there were two). There was often light banter and laughter throughout this process. Later in the dressing rooms around dinnertime one night at the *Salle Duvernay* for example, there was relaxed camaraderie, for example as I noted, "the dancers are comfortable being naked, dressing and undressing, together. They share their make-up with each other. Each has more than a dozen bottles of hair and skin stuff. The women are dressed in towels" (FN: 9-22-01).

Technicians continued to work alongside the dancers all afternoon to adjust and correct the technical systems and clean the stage once more before the performance. The schedule of activities for these afternoon periods at the *Salle Duvernay* is exemplary of these different kinds of preparatory tasks and their timing during the *Luna* tour:

#### Schedule for setting up and for use of human resources

##### Saturday, September 22

1-2 PM	check sound levels with the dancers
2-4 PM	spacing rehearsal
4-4 :30 PM	technical adjustments
4-6 PM	dress rehearsal
6-7 PM	dinner and make-up [for dancers]
7-8 :30 PM	technical adjustments [by technicians] and warm-up [for dancers]

8 :30 PM	clean the stage
8 :40 PM	close the curtain, open the doors [to audience]
9 PM	premiere of <i>Luna</i>
10 :15 PM	end of the performance

Sunday, September 23

3-6 PM	possibility of working on the stage [for dancers]
6-7 PM	notes, technical checking
7-8 :30 PM	call for everyone, verify (lights and sound), warm-up onstage [for the dancers]
8 :30 PM	wash the stage
9 PM	<i>Luna</i>
10 :15 PM-	strike [take down and pack away] <sup>xvi</sup>
12 :30 AM	

Towards the end of the afternoon, lobby staff began preparations to receive spectators in the waiting area at the building's entrance. The box office personnel got ready for the pre-show "rush" of audience members who hadn't previously purchased tickets, although they had been on sale for months. A house manager gave last-minute instructions to ushers and ticket takers. And at some of the venues like the *Salle Duvernay* and The Joyce Theater, but not the *Auditorium Dufour*, a café in the lobby area opened its doors, turned on the ambient music and opened the bar to serve the beverages to spectators before and after the performances (there was no intermission for *Luna*). A press table was set up in the lobby by a publicist, near the entrance to the theater space itself, in order to manage complimentary tickets, offer copies of the *Luna* press kits to dance specialists programmers and critics, and greet other specially invited guests. The doors to the venue were opened about one hour (or one half hour in some cases) before the performance was to begin, giving spectators time to buy last minute tickets, read programs, take a drink, go to the bathroom and to socialize a little.

Each evening the crowd of waiting spectators displayed a particular mood in response to various factors. For instance at the reprise performances in Montréal I noted that there was a large group of people entering and



talking as I arrive, a steady stream of movement. The line-up at the door gave the festive feeling that a popular, important event was occurring. Some people were smiling or laughing, some quiet with seeming anticipation. I wondered what they had heard, read, or seen before about *O Vertigo*. There seemed to be a relatively big crowd, and I found out later that in fact the performance that night was almost sold out. (FN: 10-12-02)

And so it was that three layers of preparatory activities went on simultaneously: dancers warmed up and practiced choreographic sequences on the stage behind a closed curtain, technicians went about setting up their systems in the backstage and technical areas, and "house management" staff sold tickets, served coffee and completed other tasks to serve the incoming audience that was entering the building's lobby.

At the end of the performance each night, I know from experience that the technical and house crews worked on closing up and putting away the performance materials, and the dancers removed their make-up and washed up. Performance equipment, stage set and props were either prepared once again for the next night's performance or packed away to be shipped out, as necessary.

#### 4.9.2 The moment of performance

These three arenas of simultaneous activity -- onstage, backstage (and technical booth) and in the lobby ("the front of house") -- moved into an increasingly alert phase of readiness as the beginning of the performance ("curtain time") loomed near.

Technical directors and house managers finished their last minute checks of equipment and personnel and made the last minute call to audience and performers. The large stage curtains were still closed, ushers took their places, and a publicist gave a last glance at her press table and ticket list. The

signal to open the doors to the inner sanctum of the house, for waiting spectators to enter, was given by the house manager. At the very same moment backstage, the dancers were finalizing details of their costumes and make-up.

Several minutes before the beginning of the performance, audience members left the lobby. They filed into the seating area of the theater, displaying their tickets to the usher surveying the entrance door as proof they had paid the price of entry or been officially invited. Then they searched for and found their pre-appointed places, and settled down in their seats where they would remain for the next hour and a half or so. In the last few minutes before the curtain would be raised, the spectators began to read the programs given to them as they entered (Appendix F), and/or talk to their nearby companions, or if alone some of them sat lost in thought in quiet anticipation. The programs offered a wealth of information to those who desired to read them: artists' biographies, profile of *O Vertigo*, duration of the choreography, a poetic text about *Luna* by Rober Racine, a statement about her work by choreographer Laurin names and functions of all dance company and venue employees, names of sponsors, and a photo from *Luna*. And for some of the venues, like at The Joyce, these programs were embedded in a small magazine produced by the venue and with advertising and short articles about other performances in the same season.

At the same moment, dancers, technical directors, stage crew and costume mistress were asked to take their starting positions for *Luna*. During the pilot study I noted the dancers' typically qualitative shift from relaxed pre-show behavior to alert, energized and concentrated states which, in terms of Laban Movement Analysis could be called bound flow, direct space and intensely activated stillness. (FN: 8-18-00)

The anticipated moment was about to begin. At three minutes until curtain time, the *O Vertigo* dancers were already onstage in a generally quiet and meditative mood. They made little last minute rehearsals of specific

sections. Technical assistant Ouellette, from *O Vertigo's* stage crew, gave a "one minute to curtain" call. I was sitting just behind him and heard him make the announcement on the microphone, and the technicians talking energetically to each other from Alain's headphones. *O Vertigo's* costume mistress Danièle Lecourtois, stood poised in the wings in case of emergency, and to help with costume changes. (FN: 9-23-01)

All at once, the house lights dimmed over the house, plunging the audience into the darkness where they would remain until the end. The curtain opened to reveal the stage space, and the first image of the dance with dancers onstage (*Luna* didn't begin with an empty space). On one evening in particular, I noticed an audible sound like a collective intake of breath coming from the audience at this moment. And because the curtains in these large theaters were massive, the curtain's motion – whether it was being pulled apart, lifted upwards, or a more elaborate draping – was in itself a dramatic phenomenon. It was then that participants' attitudes towards time, space, and effort (in the Laban sense of qualitative attention and emotion) shifted in seconds from the everyday to the extra-ordinary. At the *Salle Duvernay* one night, I noted my own experience of the performance's beginning from my backstage corner: "[...] gentle and soft [...] a low light blinds me [...] the dancing begins and it is suddenly mesmerizing." (FN: 9-23-01)

During the next hour and fifteen minutes of the *Luna* performance, the attention of all participants in the theater space was drawn towards the illuminated three-sided performance space where the dancers were on display: the stage. This performance area quickly became hotter and brighter, from the heat and intensity of lighting instruments, than the surrounding house and backstage. When watching from backstage, I found the brilliance of the stage lights almost painful and the heat they gave off caused me to sweat. (FN: 9-6-00)

The audience's attention fixated on the stage. In all venues, they invariably fell into a collective stillness and silence, as demanded by the

decorum of these kinds of performances. During the show the audiences made only the slightest of sounds and motions (FN: 8-18-00). Thus communing with fellow spectators in the dark, they witnessed the expressive goings on in *Luna's* choreographic universe. (In a later chapter they will reveal some of what they were thinking and experiencing as they watched.) I looked around me at in the *Salle Duvernay* in Montréal one night to catch a glimpse of how that particular public was watching. I observed their physical positions and intuited their psychological states:

Each one had assumed a watching posture, some with head cocked sideways, others with a hand supporting their head. A child talks out loud and we all struggled not to draw our attention away from the dancing. Someone makes a loud coughing sound. We all kept trying to stay fully 'inside' the stage action. (FN: 10-12-02)

As the audience watched, technicians worked vigorously backstage and invisible to the audience as they attended to the mechanics of stagecraft. As previously mentioned, the entire stage and backstage area was kept separate from the part of the building reserved for spectators, to the point where artists and technicians even entered from a different set of doors than the audience – the “artists’ entrance.” From my vantage point in the offstage wings one night I described the backstage activity at the *Salle Duvernay* as an “inner frame” with ladders, hidden mechanisms and activities, filled with costumes discarded and changed and dancers at attentive rest in the wings (FN: 9-23-01). Laurin described *Luna's* backstage activities from her point of view:

For the dancers [...] this is a piece that is very complex in the wings. [...] There is a lot of movement. Move the microphone.

Carry the microphone, rapid change, take off the dresses, put the dresses aside because the wings are small...There is all of this aspect that is also part of the choreography, and you mustn't lose your concentration. When you go out onto the stage [it's important to know] how to keep the thread intact.<sup>xvii</sup> (I-GL2).

All of this technical activity was minutely controlled by the technical director through headphones communicating to the technical crew who were in various positions around the stage. He "called the cues" with a ready-and-go from a cue sheet in coordination with key moments in the stage action.

I also focused my attention on the dancers as they exited offstage, ever so close to me at the times when I stood in the wings. They each had a personal way of using the momentary offstage time for recuperation as they waited to move on again: some were relaxed and casual, at attention with a wide stance, practicing a form of meditation, racing for time during a costume change, drinking water, alert, sitting, rocking and swaying, or doing little exercises (FN: 9-23-01).

All the while, the dancers transmitted from the stage and through their bodies and minds, the complex, poetic choreography of *Luna* that the choreographer had confided in them. Their attention was directed out towards the audience, which was completely invisible to them in the darkness (as I confirmed from backstage). If the *Luna* audience wasn't visible, the dancers did indeed perceive their presence, as dancer Riede mused for instance:

It's a very special place, the performance. Just the fact that so many people are watching us brings us into a completely different state of mind that's very special and very rare. You know? It's almost like a gift that I'm getting from the audience.

And then it makes me available to them and to myself in a very intense way. (I-AR)

At the same time, the dancers were necessarily giving some of their attention as well to the synchronization and interaction of their movements with that of their fellow dancers onstage and with the technical effects going on around them as they danced. What I found most fascinating was the transformation of the dancers' state-of-being as they passed through the barrier between being on and offstage. During the pilot project I observed one of these moments: "Mélanie walks slowly towards the stage from the wing, transforming her energy from that of waiting to entering. It's an intensifying, sharpening, thickening of psychic and physical energy" (FN: 8-18-00).

The dance came to an end as the onstage lights faded out to black and the curtain closed. With these technical cues, the ending to *Luna* was made clear. All audiences I observed reacted with little hesitation as they began to applaud<sup>7</sup>. It was at this moment that each spectator emerged suddenly from their state of meditative stillness and silence to express with their bodies and voices their degree of satisfaction with the performance. In his poetic essay "Understanding Ovation" poet Gilbert (2001) proposed that "applause is a public ritual, governed by elaborate codes and conventions [...] an intricate mesh of sonic filaments (that) connects every person in the hall to one another" (p. 15). From hundreds of personal experiences with applauding, I can state with confidence that the custom at contemporary dance performances in North America usually allows for several types of expression with varying degrees of intensity: clapping, standing (the ovation), and vocal sounds that vary from culture to culture (whistling and calling out "Bravo!" for instance is common in Québec). Presenters and dance critics assessed the

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<sup>7</sup> The case of the New York audience's exceptionally quiet reaction, according to presenter Wexler (I-MW) was due to the proximity of their performance to the September 11 World Trade Center tragedy.



relative enthusiasm or coolness of the audience in terms of the qualities of their applause for *Luna*.

As the applause began, the curtains reopened and dancers and choreographer came forward from backstage to bow to spectators in appreciation and thanks. It was here, as I noted, that they shifted their performance personas from those of *Luna* dancers to revealing their “real” selves as performers (FN: 8-18-00). At the *Auditorium Dufour* in Chicoutimi, for instance, I watched the performance from the middle of the auditorium. I noted that the audience seemed particularly still and silent during the performance, but that there was a strong wave of applause at the end with a spontaneous standing ovation and whistling. Almost every single person rose their feet yelling and yelping (FN: 11-3-01). And from dancer Long’s point of view, the applause in Lucerne and in Düsseldorf were the crucial moments when she could finally try to discern each audience’s particular reactions to the dance and her dancing:

The audience [in Lucern) was actually very generous, they seemed to really like the show because they clapped a lot, you know. Sometimes it’s really hard when you don’t actually speak to them afterwards but you just have the applause to go by and you’re trying to judge, ‘OK, is this polite applause or is this really...’ [...] I’d heard that the Swiss are a difficult audience, a little cold. [The Düsseldorf audience] was very appreciative too. It was very interesting to see how people reacted. They would sort of clap a lot and get excited [...] it was like, okay, this is how people react to the piece. (I-D)

On this first European tour of *Luna*, the audience reaction was also described as positive and enthusiastic by Lucern dance producer Walter Heun. He had long been a supporter and commissioner of *O Vertigo*’s work. In his written

reply to my emailed interview questions he described and contextualized the enthusiasm of his local audiences' reactions:

The audience [of Lucern Theater] absolutely loved the piece. We had all kinds of reactions, from stomping feet to standing ovations. We presented the piece to an audience of approximately 2,000 people (in a city of 55,000 inhabitants). [...] *Luna* is one of the best-received performances we did in Lucerne. (I-WH)

In Chicoutimi, rather than leaving the theater directly after the performance or sitting down in a café with dance-going companions to talk about their experiences, the audience was given the option to join programmer Beaulieu in a post-performance talk with the artists. At the last minute she decided to hold it in a small room set up as a café, just off the lobby. All of the dancers, the rehearsal and executive directors were in attendance, but Laurin was immersed in a personal crisis at that time and didn't travel to Chicoutimi at all. Beaulieu began by introducing the dance company members to about 25 audience members, and proceeded to inject terse comments about the dancers' training and how hard they had to work at their *métier* of dancing. Her own interests in dance, from evidence of this conversation with the audience, seemed to lie mainly in the technical quality of the dancing and choreography rather than choreographic form and content. Spectators asked the dancers if the music was recorded, commented on effects of the choreographic elements and themes, asked about the challenges of dancing and the processes of creating *Luna*, reminisced about past performances. *O Vertigo* dancers gave details about their training, expressed their views on the questions. (FN: 11-3-01 and 11-4-01)

#### 4.9.3 Touring and continued performing

The company toured *Luna* for over two years to cities near Montréal for only a few days, and also in blocks of time as long as one month for the residency and premiere in Lucerne. During these periods, they lived with fellow company members day and night while traveling, setting up, performing, and rehearsing together away from home.

Dancer Chi Long characterized the dynamics of touring as “we go on tour and we just do our show [...] having to look for restaurants every night.” The relatively longer duration of their residency in Lucerne had finally allowed her to be “in an apartment [...] you know, like making your little life in a different city” (I-D). The necessity to travel for extended periods and on a regular basis is part of the demands of being a member of *O Vertigo* dance. In the case of *Luna* they gave over 80 performances in all in their home city and on tour. As Laurin told me, the company survives economically, in part, through commissions granted to them by non-Montréal dance presenters, and there is not enough potential audience in Montréal to keep them performing the work at home for more than a few performances, as was the case with *Luna* (I-GL1).

Several kinds of “polishing” and “refreshing” rehearsals continued throughout the touring period of *Luna*. During the two years that *Luna* was on tour, other company activities (the summer workshop and commissions for other creations) and time-off periods intervened, requiring work sessions in which details of the choreography were reviewed, and the dance refreshed in the dancers’ memories after a hiatus. My most prolific informant, dancer Rodrigue exclaimed one day to me that the “real work for the dancers” on the dance material really only begins after opening night when they “discover the small things that expand and enrich the work.” She continued that “work on the choreography that begins after opening night is much the dancers’

responsibility, with Laurin supervising and the rehearsal director always present" (FN: 6-6-00). And so these rehearsals, along with continuing performances, became further sites for the dancers' contribution to *Luna's* aesthetic.

Laurin described the transformation of *Luna* during repeated performances in different theatres as a cultivation of the dancers' "interior garden" (or *jardin intérieur* in the original French), a concept discussed earlier. She admits that there is a continual transformation of the work, but that this evolution must keep alive the memory of the essence that was found by each dancer at the beginning. And there was also the necessity to integrate new dancers (Nguyen replaced Rose during the first *Luna* tour for instance), and adaptation of the dancing to the unfamiliar environment of each new theater space and stage. (I-GL1)

#### 4.10 The last dance and the after-life of *Luna*

It was not possible to locate a final, absolute ending for the *Luna* project and dance event. But a reasonable and dramatic ending point with which to finally frame this study of the *Luna* event emerged unexpectedly one day in a wonderful email. It was from my ever so generous informant Rodrigue, writing to me about her next artistic project only a few days after the last performance of *Luna*. On the same correspondence, she wrote about the wonderful way in which the *Luna* project came to a close one night:

You know that last Saturday we gave the very last performance of *Luna* in Prague and something marvelous happened. There was an eclipse of the moon that evening. I won't tell you how we all felt! We said goodbye to *Luna*, and for many of us, to O

*Vertigo*. A new stage begins [...]. (Marie-Claude Rodrigue, email correspondence, November 10, 2003)

This last performance marked the official administrative end of a two-year cycle in the *O Vertigo* calendar of the *Luna* project and its performances. A new creative session for Laurin's next piece (announced simply at this point as *Création 2004*) was about to begin. And for Rodrigue it was a real ending in another way as well, for she was among the five dancers who were leaving the company after the last performance of *Luna*.

There was always a possibility that, like previous choreographies of *O Vertigo*, *Luna* might be revived by invitation or set onto another other dancers, as was the case when I first entered the field. Rodrigue explained to me that the summer of 2000 had marked a new stage for the company in rebuilding past repertory (FN: 8-2-00). Laurin explained that she conceived of the company as one that primarily does research and creation, rather than revivals. But she added that on an occasional basis certain choreographies had been recreated at a later time and for dancers other than her company members (I-GL1).

What actually were the remains of the *Luna* event, if the performance was nothing but an ephemeral phenomenon that existed in and for the moment? In the sections of this chapter on documentation and management activities, I described various kinds of material traces of *Luna* that were brought into existence by participants: artists' and presenters' notes, a film, a CD ROM and press kit, posters and programs, budgets, grant applications and reports. Some of these were published and remain as a permanent public record, others filed away in the dance company archives. And it is feasible, because the practice is common and Laurin a major artistic figure in Québec, to presume that at a later time dance students might undertake research about *Luna* and dance researchers inscribe *Luna* into dance history books.

But immaterial images and ideas concerning *Luna* also continued to exist in the consciousness of participants after this last presentation was over and its materials packed away. Traces of this dance performance will likely remain and continue to live on in the consciousness of spectators and the bodies (literally their “muscle memory”) and minds of the dancers who danced it. One thing is certain and even customary in the framework of the dance research community for which this dissertation has been written. This ethnographic study of *Luna* will inevitably become a permanent part of the dance research community through the availability (on microfilm) of this doctoral dissertation that I also have the intention to disseminate through consequent publications, conference papers and further research projects. This doctoral dissertation is, after all, an artifact of the *Luna* dance event.

#### 4.11 Conclusion

How is it possible to pull together all the threads of these activities into a coherent scheme? Ronström (1989) put forward the idea that all dance event activities are organized around the “participants’ common perceptual focus” of the dancing, in this case the performances of the *Luna* choreography. And so perhaps it is useful to think of the complex web of activities described above as those that were necessary to bring the performance of *Luna* into being and to maintain it. In other words, at the onset Laurin needed to imagine the dance, then have the means to employ a company of dancers and the personnel to create and perform it, presenters had to provide a theater space with all of its amenities and attract spectators to the performances, and so on.

Another way to think about the wealth of goings on at the *Luna* dance event is as a chronological progression from preparation, to enactment, followed by the aftermath of its effects. In this temporal organization of the



activities the event might be seen to begin with the first inspiration in the mind of Laurin. It would then be a matter of following its development, at many simultaneous strata, until the dance is performed for the last time and resonates in its aftermath. This calls attention, for instance, to the parallel work of the *O Vertigo* company artists and personnel in the creation of *Luna* and its promotional materials. And the moment of performance calls for the labor of dancers, technicians and the venue staff at the same time as the audience does it's own work of perceiving and interpreting *Luna* while sitting quietly in the dark.

Both of these perspectives contributed to the structure of this chapter. But no matter how the various activities of the *Luna* event are ordered and organized into schematic relationships, what strikes me is the sheer interdependence – despite the crucial role of Laurin -- of these various actions and interactions, which together form the whole.

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Original French texts

<sup>i</sup> "[...] généralement, nos pièces ont un cycle de trois ans. Un an pour la créer – je parle ici de la période avec les danseurs – et deux autres années de diffusion." Ginette Laurin

<sup>ii</sup> "[...] aussitôt que l'autre est mise sur scène." Ginette Laurin

<sup>iii</sup> "En fait, je ne sais pas comment ça se fait, mais c'est vraiment ça. Je suis assise le soir de la première, je regarde le spectacle et je me dis 'ma prochaine pièce, ça va être ça.'" Ginette Laurin

<sup>iv</sup> "[...] le C.A. est constitué des personnes qui sont plus au niveau artistique, d'autres affaires, communications, et moi ma fonction c'est de m'assurer que Ginette soit défendue artistiquement. Parce que dans un C.A., on peut avoir tendance, des fois, à aller du côté des affaires pour rentabiliser la compagnie – on coupe trois semaines de salaire et on envoie les danseurs au chômage, ou on ne fait pas de chorégraphie." Claude Gosselin

<sup>v</sup> "[...] un moment donné, en studio avec les danseurs, on a découvert qu'il y avait une dimension où on s'approchait de l'infiniment grand, avec l'idée de la création de l'univers. Les planètes étaient présentes probablement à cause de la rondeur des éléments scéniques et de la technique d'optique qu'on utilisait, qui est un procédé très ancien qui a servi à découvrir justement le fonctionnement des planètes et la création de l'univers. Alors, ça nous a ramené à ce phénomène. J'ai décidé de rencontrer un astrophysicien."

Ginette Laurin

<sup>vi</sup> "[...] la période de création est longue, toute seule il y a une période qui peut prendre un an. Juste à penser, trouver des inspirations et se laisser pénétrer du sujet. Après, il y a un travail de production, la recherche des collaborateurs, la création de l'environnement scénique, le compositeur."

Ginette Laurin

<sup>vii</sup> "[...] je crois que plein de choses nous arrivent et que nous ne sommes pas conscients des possibilités qui s'offrent à nous. [...] je suis assez précise avec la thématique que je veux explorer, la façon de le faire est assez ouverte et laisse quand même de la place aux interprètes. Je suis aussi très directive avec le mouvement, mais ma façon d'intégrer le mouvement à la situation est très automatiste. Un peu dans la veine des peintres automatistes." Ginette Laurin

<sup>viii</sup> "Pour moi, cette création-là, dans la salle de répétition, s'est faite avec une facilité et une douceur que je n'avais pas rencontrées avant." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>ix</sup> "[...] elle nous dit comme dans un rêve 'J'aimerais que tu prennes la fille et qu'elle vole derrière ton dos.' Puis nous, on doit trouver une façon. [...] Elle donne quand même la prise plus ou moins, la façon de prendre la partenaire, comment elle voit la personne en l'air [...] (et) on essaie 'd'être automatiste', on essaie de trouver la façon la plus spontanée." Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>x</sup> "[...] la haute technologie de ce spectacle a été très demandant par rapport à d'autres spectacles [...] on ne savait pas quoi faire avec ça, on n'avait pas

d'idée précise au départ. Les choses les plus intéressantes de ce spectacle ont été trouvées vers la fin. Il n'y a pas eu vraiment de processus de création technique parallèle à la [création de la] danse." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xi</sup> Ginette: "C'est le même discours que vous faites du début jusqu'à la fin, même si vous avez changé de danseur. Vous avez tous le même rythme. Il y a quelque chose de musculaire. Plus intransigeante. Ressentir l'urgence. *Tense and fast*." Anne: "Est-ce qu'on a tous la même idée? Quel est le focus [des yeux]?" Ginette: "Pour certaines, le regarde d'à côté n'est pas encore placé. Regarder sans tourner la tête. Vous témoigner de quelque chose. Même histoire, même urgence." Mélanie: "On a vécu la même expérience..."

<sup>xii</sup> "Il y a toujours un travail où les danseurs doivent s'impliquer d'une façon particulière. Prendre possession, finalement, de leur partie chorégraphique, voir comment ils vont l'interpréter. On laisse beaucoup de place à l'autonomie, d'une certaine façon." Ginette Laurin

<sup>xiii</sup> "Plus la compagnie a des activités, plus le budget annuel est grand et plus on peut allouer d'argent à la création et plus de semaines où on peut maintenir les danseurs. Ça génère des profits et pour moi, la continuité est très importante. Je ne pourrais pas travailler à projet, c'est-à-dire engager des danseurs aux 20 semaines, faire la création et leur dire qu'on se revoit dans 30 semaines ou dans 20 semaines.' J'ai beaucoup de difficulté à travailler de cette façon-là. C'est certain que c'est très difficile aussi de maintenir une équipe pendant 40 semaines, financièrement c'est très demandant. Mais pour moi, de maintenir l'aspect de continuité, l'aspect de groupe qui est vraiment très solide, et qui travaille longtemps ensemble est très important." Ginette Laurin

<sup>xiv</sup> "Je dessinais la mise en scène, avec des petits bonhommes et un petit plan de scène et qu'est-ce qui avait sur la scène. J'ai plein de petits cahiers chez moi. Je fais un dessin [...] et après j'écris toujours les mêmes choses: le nombre de danseurs, structure, décors, costumes. Des petits points qui me permettent, au fil des années, de me souvenir de quoi a l'air la pièce. [...] Les dernières années, [...] j'écris sur les programmes, des petites notes. Des choses qui me viennent à l'esprit..." Diane Boucher

<sup>xv</sup> " [...] même le stage d'été est une façon de créer." Ginette Laurin

<sup>xvi</sup> "Horaire de montage et des ressources humaines

samedi, 22 septembre

12h30	arrivée des danseurs
13h à 14h	niveau son avec danseurs
14h à 16h	<i>spacing</i>
16h à 16h30	raccords techniques
16h à 18h	général
18h à 19h	souper et maquillage
19h à 20h30	raccords techniques et réchauffement
20h30	nettoyage du plateau

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20h40	fermeture du rideau, ouverture des portes
21h	première <i>Luna</i>
22h15	fin du spectacle

dimanche, 23 septembre

15h à 18h	possibilité de travail sur scène
18h à 19h	notes, raccords, répétition (danseurs)
19h à 20h30	appel pour tous, vérification (éclairages, son) réchauffement sur scène
20h30	lavage du plancher
21h	<i>Luna</i>
22h15 à 00h30	démontage"

horaire rédiger par Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xvii</sup> "Pour les danseurs [...] C'est une pièce très complexe en coulisses. [...] il y a beaucoup de déplacements : déplacer le micro, apporter le micro, changement rapide, enlever les robes, tasser les robes parce que les coulisses sont petites... Il y a tout cet aspect qui fait aussi partie de la chorégraphie, il ne faut pas perdre sa concentration. Quand on revient sur scène, comment garder le fil." Ginette Laurin

## CHAPTER V

### THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN *LUNA*: THEIR IDENTITIES, BACKGROUNDS AND ROLES

The analysis of “who” [...] has special significance because it concerns roles and memberships: who makes the dance, who does the dance, who helps the dance become reality, who views the dance [...]. The configurations are as varied as the societies in which they occur [...]. (Kealiinohomoku, 1976, p. 238)

As Kealiinohomoku points out, the matter of who participated in the dance event is more than a question of biographical events and sociological facts. As portrayed in the capsule portraits in this chapter, *Luna*'s participants also revealed how they articulated, understood and carried out their distinct roles and relationships within the parameters of the dance event.

These participant (and institutional) biographies portray some of the social and art world characteristics of the groups to which they belonged – whether as spectator, artist, student, technician, administrator, personnel or dance specialist. Embedded within these narratives of people's lives in the dance world are also initial insights, discussed in more depth in the third section of the thesis, about how dance event participation had come to bring meaning to their lives. They also reveal how they came to formulate their particular views about art in general and contemporary dance in particular. And of course, these biographies also contain fragments of events and ideas about Québec's dance history, as recounted by its protagonists.

This chapter then is a collection of capsule “dance biographies,” drawn from the data, of more than 50 *Luna* participants. This represents a small sampling if it is taken into account that *Luna* was a relatively large-scale event involving ultimately scores of event-makers and thousands of audience members. But a wide array of participants are portrayed, dancers and non-dancers, those with a life-long commitment and those with a short-term or momentary involvement. They are organized into five sections (and further subdivided into sections on individuals), each one isolating a participant group with distinct roles in the event: (a) the dance company itself as an entity, (b) the dance company’s artistic members, (c) the dance company’s and presenting venues’ directors, personnel, technicians, and *O Vertigo*’s dance students, (d) expressive specialists who were either dance presenters, funding agents or writers, and (e) members of the audience.

These profiles were drawn from the available data. In search of individual and collective identities of *Luna* participants, I charted (Tables A1 and A2, B, C, D1 and D2) and discussed briefly a certain number of their social characteristics. In the case of the dancers, dance students and audience members, I made collective interpretations of these variables in search of parameters and patterns. As well as biographical material, I have also incorporated into this chapter, discussions of pertinent themes that arose as free nodes during the coding process and clarify their collective identities and roles. Differences in the organization and content of each section were the result of the nature of the data type referenced.

Since this chapter is largely based on data from individual interviews with participants, all citations within the biographical profiles (but not the other sections) can be presumed excerpts from these interviews, unless otherwise indicated. They will not be written in throughout the text in order to keep the text from becoming overburdened with parenthetical references.



## 5.1 The *O Vertigo* dance company

At the epicenter of the dance event, the *O Vertigo* dance company was the organizational entity that produced the choreographic work and employer to the artistic members and personnel who created, performed and managed the dance performances. An apt illustration of sociologist Becker's network of people whose cooperative activity is required to produce an artwork (Becker, 1982, p. xi), the *O Vertigo* dance company as a legal entity is a cultural organization founded in 1984. It is a not-for-profit corporation whose central mission is to produce new choreographic works by its founder Ginette Laurin (Appendix F). Two opposing analogies to describe the company arose regularly during fieldwork and interviews, and are examined below: (a) that of *O Vertigo* as a "huge machine" and (b) of the company as a family-like group.

### 5.1.1 A large-scale non-profit corporation: "the huge machine"

Newest and youngest company members Patrick Lamothe and Mélanie Demers as fieldwork began, perhaps because previously accustomed to working with more informally structured dance groups and companies before joining *O Vertigo*, expressed their perception of *O Vertigo* as an overwhelmingly large and business-like entity. As Lamothe exclaimed, "It's a bit straight, *une grosse machine* (a huge machine), so different from what I am used to as an independent [artist]!" (FN: 8-1-00). Other kinds of dance event participants in this study spoke of the company variously as large-scale, artistically important and noteworthy, of high quality and skill, popular, well managed and successful. Lamothe added that he did find it luxurious to be able to work every day for months on end at the creative process, and that *O Vertigo's* success at booking tours would allow him to

realize a long-cherished dream of traveling the world (I-PL). German dance programmer Walter Heun, longtime supporter and commissioner of Laurin's choreography, articulated his estimation of *O Vertigo* in this way: "It is important to support also artists who [like Laurin] have been pioneering the art form and have now developed a mature form of presentation that addresses [itself] to larger audiences. [...] [*O Vertigo*] is artistically interesting, it is still 'real' dance, and it offers a lot of visual impressions and it presents a movement repertory of a high virtuosity" (I-WH).

At the time of the *Luna* event *O Vertigo* had indeed become one of Québec's largest, best-funded and most prolific dance touring companies. Provincial funding agents counted them among the top ten most important companies in size, budget and touring. A three-year plan was in action and the operating budget, as executive director Lagacé carefully conceded, was ample enough to give them "the necessary resources to achieve what Ginette artistically wants to do [...]" (I-BL). They rented their own building full-time and employed 10 dancers for 42 weeks a year with an option for them to work more weeks if they desired. Already in 1994, the company had enough income from grants to pay operating expenses, and the size of the investment by co-producers (European and U.S. presenters) in the creative costs of new work was large enough to nearly cover the entire expenses of making *Luna*. (Although when the Texan composer was fired, the University of Texas cancelled their financial contribution, costs had to be cut and less technology was consequently used in *Luna*.) These "choreographic commissions" from non-Québécois presenters, along with the "very good fees they were making" (e.g. earning) according to Laurin, allowed the company to claim an unusually high 40% of their revenue as self-earned (i.e. not directly from public funding sources) (I-HB1). As a large, well-established institution, *O Vertigo* was also able to pay for part of the dancers' training and health insurance costs, and to offer salaries to the dancers of 450\$ to 700\$ weekly (before taxes were deducted). These salaries were among the highest in

Montréal for contemporary dancers and well above the required norm set by the *Union des Artists*.

Over the years they had gradually developed an administrative structure with full-time personnel: executive, artistic, technical, production and communications directors along with a communications assistant and a receptionist. Part-time workers included extra touring staff (costume mistress and technical assistant), and two touring agents. Contractual artistic collaborators for the *Luna* project were costume, sound, and visual designers (who also executed their designs), photographer, filmmaker and camera crew, and graphic artists. In Becker's wide view of who actually contributes to the making of the art work (1982), one might also include in this larger circle those who manufactured the dance floor, designed computer software for the visual effects, and so on.

The mandate of this company of artists and administrative personnel was to produce new choreographic works, but they also engage also a cluster of auxiliary activities, including reconstructing older works, that are described in the next chapter. For example, as I entered the field the company was undertaking many projects at once: planning for an annual summer dance workshop and school shows, rehearsing a duet touring program prepared for Montréal's network of *Maisons de la Culture*, undertaking the revival of a previous work to be danced by a Brazilian dance company, negotiating commissions to create choreography for two other artistic events, "touch-up" rehearsals for older repertory in preparation for upcoming summer tours to the U.S., participation in a television program, and other projects as well. Concerning the psychological and artistic benefits of the recent reconstruction work with older choreographies, dancer Rodrigue explained to me one day in the field:

[...] since the last two years, the company has been reviving and touring and creating [choreography] at the same time. More

layers and kinds of activities than ever before. [Ginette] has enjoyed this phase, and says with some pride that we are one of the few companies in Montréal that doesn't always "throw away" their older work. (FN: 6-6-00)

During the meetings I observed everyone being given the chance to voice their ideas. But as dancer Demers intimated to me one day "there is a hierarchy which becomes apparent after some time, the result of people's tenures and other factors" (I-MD). In our interview, technical director Proulx compared the structure of *O Vertigo* (and other companies with a single artistic director) to that of the repertory theatre groups with which he had previously worked, in which multiple directors make decisions and so power was de-centralized among several people. He revealed his own difficulties in working with the *O Vertigo* structure:

With *O Vertigo*, there is one artistic director who makes all of the creations. And so you work for someone, for an individual. As for me, I find that I am at the mercy of every shift in one person's moods [...] no matter what kind of title is given to anyone as director of this or that, there is nothing that passes above this person.<sup>1</sup> (I-JP)

As well, a hierarchy in salary was developed by and for the dancers, ironically through a democratic exercise. Dancer Barry told me the story of how several years ago administrators gave to the dancers the responsibility for working out a salary policy for themselves to replace the previous practice of idiosyncratic individual negotiations. As a group, the dancers decided to recognize seniority in what became a three-tier pay scale. (I-RB/AB)

In terms of the choreographic creation on a day-to-day basis, who is in control and making decisions? Observation of creative processes revealed

patterns of give-and-take among dancers and choreographer, although Laurin always remained the final authority, as illustrated by this dialogue between the choreographer and long-time dancer Gould, who was also Laurin's ex-life companion:

Ken remarks that Kha and Patrick aren't using the same grip for their lift as he does. Ginette responds, "They have the right to use a different grip than you do." Ken: "Do I have the right to suggest something else to them?" Ginette: "Yes. But Patrick has the right to not listen to you!"<sup>ii</sup> (FN: 10-5-00)

This verbal exchange between choreographer Laurin and dancer Gould suggests one of the ways in which a continual, if subtle, negotiation took place in which Laurin's vision was mediated through her dancers' bodies and personalities.

### 5.1.2 A "very strange" artistic family

For dancer Riede, the experience of working with the company wasn't like being part of an institution but rather "very much like a very strange family! (laughter) [...] I feel like I have a very personal relationship to every single person. They're not my best friends [but] I find there's a very friendly exchange, always, and the constant desire to live in a good way [in] the time that we have with each other." (I-AR) Even Lamothe spoke of his delight in being around fellow dancers who coached him, and that when they go onstage and on tour they "are a family" (I-PL). Riede agreed, remarking that, "when we're on tour we get into being with each other much more. And then we start exchanging stories from our lives" (I-AR).

The family metaphor for *O Vertigo* was reinforced to my mind by the fact that there were four co-habiting couples of life partners among company members, and that I overheard the dancers on several occasions planning outside social activities together during the *Luna* project. I noted frequent laughter as dancers worked, and little acts of support and affection among them too numerous to count, for instance: “A lift between Mélanie and Simon is extended into an improvised rocking. At little interludes Chi takes a moment’s pause to give Simon a long hug and massage, Anna massages David’s shoulders.” (FN: 8-9-00)

In the kitchen there was a wall covered with group photos taken on tour, and other personal mementos contributed by dancers (photo 16). Not only was there a list of members’ birthdays hanging on a kitchen bulletin board, but there were even informal company birthday celebrations in the kitchen with cake and candles.

If *O Vertigo* was like a family, then Laurin’s role might be seen as its sensitive, benevolent matriarch. Throughout my fieldwork sessions, she consistently behaved in a humane and caring manner towards her dancers’ physical and psychological well being. She engaged them personally in making contributions to the creative process in many ways that I will describe in the following chapter. Rehearsal director Brisson affirmed this view that Laurin distinguishes herself among her choreographer peers by the quality of her listening and communication with the company dancers. And dancer Barry (Brisson’s life partner) spoke of Laurin as someone who “has tremendous courage in terms of being a creator. She is often – as Raymond pointed out – confronted with doubt or insecurity but it never prevents her from being able to communicate. If you have something to say to her or to discuss, she is open to the point that sometimes she will be hurt.” Brisson concluded that the results of this “good chemistry” among the dancers and choreographer could be seen in the work itself and in the longevity of the



dancers' tenure with the company, many staying for 5 to 10 years. (I-RB/ AB)

## 5.2 *O Vertigo's* artistic members

What kinds of people were the arts professionals who created *Luna* ? In what environments were they brought up, under what circumstances did they begin dancing, and how did they articulate their role in the dance-making and the world of dance? The artists engaged in the *Luna* project were a choreographer (the dance maker), 10 dancers (the dance "interpreters"), an apprentice, a rehearsal director, and three main artistic collaborators (for the soundscape, lighting design, technological imaging, stage setting and costumes).

As a way to begin delineating the notion of "artist" particular to contemporary dance events like *Luna*, the interviews with dancers and artistic collaborators revealed three artistic values which formed a nearly complete consensus among them. These were the desire and necessity for passion about ones' artistic work, " being true to oneself" when making art, and the core value of their artistic lives: a propensity for creativity.

There are also clearly set out social norms in Canada and Québec for distinguishing professional artists from non-professionals established by public funding agencies. For the practical purposes of deciding who may have access to public funding, the 2003 Canada Council for the Arts eligibility criteria at the time of this writing read:

Professional artist: someone who has specialized training in his or her artistic field (not necessarily in academic institutions), who is recognized as such by his or her peers (artists working in the same tradition), who is committed to devoting more time to the artistic activity, if financially feasible, and who has a history of public presentation. » (Canada Council for the Arts, 2003).

All of the artists in *Luna* who are profiled below, with the exception of the pre-professional apprentice, fulfill these government-ordained criteria.

Certain characteristics of Canadian artists, extracted from data in the 2001 Canadian census, had just been made public by specialist consultants as this study was being prepared. Statistics Canada defined arts practices as a kind of social work they described as “the production or transmission of creative products and services.” According to Hill Strategies researchers (2004), their data confirmed that Canadian artists in the non-profit sector as a group, and in comparison to the population in general, demonstrate the following traits: (a) a high level of education (40% have a university diploma), (b) in majority self-employed and female, (c) earn a very low income, an average of 23,500\$ as compared for instance with about 25,000\$ for the average Montréal (Ville de Montréal, 2005), (d) as a group have more than tripled in size in the last 30 years. These general characteristics begin to form a group portrait for the individual artists portrayed below.

The stories of the *Luna* artists to follow include details about their backgrounds and family histories, education and values, and the historical era and socio-cultural environment in which they lived and worked. Certain characteristics of the dance creators are summarized in Table B: role in the dance company sex, year born, number of years in dance, year they joined *O Vertigo*, home city, parent’s economic status, and education.

### 5.2.1 Choreographer

Choreographer Ginette Laurin was born in 1955 and raised in revolutionary times. When she was still a toddler, the province of Québec was experiencing the first wave of *The Refus Global* movement, discussed in the introductory chapter. Just as Laurin came into young womanhood, she

visited a New York City dance milieu in the throes of postmodern experimentation. In an interview with Henri Barras, as research for his book portraying her life and work (Barras, 1995), Laurin spoke of this historic period as “effervescent” in which the timing of events was fortuitous. As she told it, there were many Montréal artists coming of age at the same time and motivating each other, going to performances in New York and exchanging ideas with artists in different disciplines (I-HB1).

During the two interviews with Barras (I-HB1 and HB2)) Laurin described growing up in a “poor and simple” Québécois family, with strict parents. They lived in the Le Gardeur district, an eastern suburb of Montréal. As the eldest of five children, the task that fell to her was to take maternal responsibilities for her younger siblings. Her grandfather was a farmer, her father a builder who constructed their many homes with his own hands. She received a strong Catholic upbringing from her parents, patterned after the very restrictive moral code of the Duplessis period in Québec. On the other hand, the Catholic nuns who schooled her were highly motivating and she learned to love school. It was during her early education that her father introduced her to classical music concerts and she took piano lessons with the nuns. She also began her studies of gymnastics that lead to “circus-like” performances and eventually to participate in local competitions. Her fateful choice to study gymnastics at eight years old was a matter of the sheer pleasure and joy she procured from the movements of her body. This irrepressible physicality led her to participate in a summer workshop with the *Grands Ballets Canadiens* in 1972, and soon after to become an apprentice and then member of one of Québec’s two Modern Dance companies at the time, *Groupe Nouvelle Aire*. It was when this dance company’s director Martine Époque took a two-year hiatus to study abroad that Laurin was first given the chance to try her hand at choreography. She was to be the only member of her family who would choose the vocation of professional artist.

Also during the Barras interviews (I-HB1 & 2), Laurin distinguished certain seminal values about children and spirituality from that period and that were carried forward into her professional life and choreographic outlook. Her love and desire for children continued throughout two marriages and were manifest in her bond with the three children she bore. During my fieldwork in 2001, they were aged 24, 20, and 12 (the two eldest from the first and the youngest from her second marriage). She explained that her children were essential in keeping her life balanced, and have obliged her to have a "simple and orderly life, keeping her feet on the ground." She also claims they are a great source of inspiration for her choreography and have "helped her to reflect on society and on what she would like to say." For instance, one day during fieldwork her youngest son was present in the dance studio and I was able to witness some of the dynamics of this maternal relationship even as Laurin was rehearsing:

Ginette's youngest son is playing with balls and mats, "amusing himself" as he says (to me). He is disruptive once in awhile, but Ginette tolerates his interruptions and distractions to some degree before sending him into the other room. He comes over to sit on her lap several times, even though he is almost as big as she is. And once, while the dancers are practicing by themselves Samuel begins a you-lift-me-I-lift-you game with Ginette, which she seems to know and enjoy. One of the dancers remarks, "He is so well loved!" (FN: 9-15-00)

As for her strong religious upbringing, Laurin told Barras that she finds its impact in her work in a non-literal fashion. She is no longer a practicing Catholic. It is a certain personal notion she has retained of "the conscience, the soul" that is important to her. By way of example, angels often figure in

her choreographies, as in sections of *Luna*, as if to represent a “second conscience” (I-HB1).

And so Ginette Laurin became a full-time choreographer with her own dance company *O Vertigo*, constituted in 1984. In the summer of 2001, the choreographic archives at Tangente confirmed that Laurin was one among 60 choreographers at work in the province of Québec. For this kind of creator-run contemporary dance company -- Laurin is not only the artistic director but also the sole choreographer -- it is the choreographer's envisioning of a new work around which the company structure and activities are conceived. As the most recent website text for *O Vertigo* proclaims, “O Vertigo is first and foremost Ginette Laurin” ([www.overtigo.com](http://www.overtigo.com), 2004). How precisely has Laurin defined her role as company choreographer? She was frequently at work in her office and attending staff meetings. Her multiple roles in the company also found her introducing her work to neophyte audiences at the *Journées de la Culture* open house, hosting a presenter's showcase in her studio during the CINARS performing arts marketplace event<sup>1</sup>, directing auditions for a new male dancer, sitting at the lighting console during public performances while making mental notes about the performance, and of course, creating and rehearsing her work with the dancers and artistic collaborators. As Laurin explained to Barras (I-HB2), since the demands of these responsibilities (and her family life) had led her in 1992 to stop dancing and performing, she has tried to find time to incorporate training into her schedule to keep in touch with the physicality of dancing. She confessed to Barras in 1995 that after 3 years of absence from dancing she felt anguished about being cut off from the work of the dancers. At the time of working on *Luna* she was practicing yoga.

Into what kind of a choreographer had Laurin fashioned herself? The Barras' interviews (I-HB1) revealed the powerful influence of the more

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<sup>1</sup> CINARS was originally the acronym for *Conférence internationale des arts de la scène*, currently called the International Exchange for the Performing Arts.

creative and improvisational orientations of the dance milieu in the '70s, her contact with interdisciplinary "happenings", and the choreographies of American postmodernists Trisha Brown and Meredith Monk. But she was especially taken by the performances "that were a little bit crazy" of visual artist Andy Warhol. Closer to home, she spoke of also being struck by the intuitive experimentations of the Québec Automatists, with whom she worked as a dancer:

I worked with Françoise Sullivan who is a choreographer and painter and I worked a little bit with Marcel Barbeau who is a painter, and they would use this method of working with the idea of automatism. So they would ask the dancer to improvise and they paint at the same time without thinking, moving really fast. And I think I took a little bit of that way to create [and just put] myself into a very specific state of mind and...and...just moving and trying to find the proper way to move that would go with the world that I want to explore, without thinking. Just trying to be very spontaneous. (I-GL/PS)

She contrasted her own creative style with that of Martine Époque, whom she spoke of as a "very mathematical" choreographer, one who would prepare everything at home before arriving at the studio with the finished choreography. Laurin had discovered an affinity for a collaborative process with her dancers that was "less cerebral" as she puts it. On her website she explains her views about artistic collaboration: "The company provides an ideal context for each artist's development, a place where ideas are solicited, welcomed, discussed, and put into practice." She continues by presenting her dance-making ethos and attitudes towards dancers: "With the performers' willing complicity, Ginette Laurin plumbs their creative resources, their memories and their emotional responses. Deeply involved in the creative



process, the dancers leave the imprint of their strong personalities" ([www.overtigo.com](http://www.overtigo.com)), 2004). Throughout my fieldwork I noted her way of working with the dancers as playful, humane and exuberant. In her role as artistic director, Laurin was in charge of writing a project proposal for fundraising, directing the creative process for the new work, providing insights and corrections to the work, and making all final decisions about the choreography. And along with her rehearsal director Raymond Brisson (profiled in the next section), she also remained responsible for the evolution and performance quality of the work throughout its touring life: "It's my role along with Raymond to do whatever we must so that the dancers are always available to give something and also to receive something [from audiences]"<sup>iii</sup> (FN: 5-2-00). *Luna* costume designer Denis Lavoie, himself a former dancer and choreographer, described his view of the choreographer's role as all-encompassing and a matter of faith: "The choreographer is the master, the one-person orchestra. It's them, their vision. It's they who must be believed"<sup>iv</sup> (I-DL).

### 5.2.2 Rehearsal director

Raymond Brisson was born and raised in Montréal, a bit east of downtown in a French area called the East End. During our interview (March 4, 2002) he recounted how it was that his family was initially poor, his bohemian father a champion amateur boxer who won Golden Globes at the *Palestre National* (later to become the *Agora de la danse* dance center). But soon after his parents married, when his father was already 36 years of age, the boxer became a bus driver at the request of his new bride. And so his family entered the relative economic stability of the middle class.

The bus driver's son Raymond dreamed of becoming a visual arts teacher. But one day during a group fasting séance with friends he fell in

love with a girl who did ballet dancing. Loving the way she moved and “her shapes,” he became attracted to dance classes at age 19. The dance world appealed to his desire for an artistic métier and to travel the world:

[...] I finished mourning my desire to be a visual arts teacher and I found in the dance a language, a form of communication and a musicality that I realized I loved very, very much. Also, I was interested in traveling more and more. And dance, this universal language, would be able to offer me the chance to work anywhere in the world, to travel while meeting people.’ (I-AB/RB)

It is interesting to note Brisson’s belief in the universal nature of dance in light of the insistence of dance anthropologists that it is not.

He began to dance seriously with neo-classic ballet company *Entre-Six*, and to tour. This led him to live in the dance mecca of New York City, where he met people from everywhere in the world – a period which “opened huge horizons” for him, stimulated his curiosity, this desire to dance and to communicate. He enjoyed his career as a dancer until one day a debilitating knee injury caused him to shift his work in the dance world to the supporting role he played in the creation of *Luna*: that of rehearsal director. He describes the responsibility of his multi-faceted work as:

[...] a role in evolution. It’s a difficult role to define. Some call it *répétiteur*, rehearsal director, assistant choreographer, assistant, artistic director...Its a little bit of all those things. I often summarize it as an ‘accompanying’ role. I accompany the dancer, the artistic director [...] I accompany the choreographer in

following what they are seeking, I help the dancer also with his own integrity as an “interpreter<sup>2</sup>, and as an individual.”<sup>vi</sup>  
(I-AB/RB)

In concrete terms, Brisson sat routinely by Laurin’s side, taking notes and exchanging quiet conversation with her as rehearsals progressed. He gave supplementary notes to the dancers after Laurin had shared her own, at the end of discrete work sessions. “Ginette begins (giving notes) and asks if Raymond has things to add. He often does.” (FN: 12-6-00) At times he interjected comments about certain specific physical coordinations, technical details, timings, spatial organization, movement qualities and the visual focus of dancers. He directed entire rehearsals and performance set-ups when Laurin wasn’t there. I noted that to all appearances, he spoke with assurance and had gained the implicit trust and respect of the dancers and choreographer.

But there were additional tasks undertaken by Brisson that expanded his role and made him even more indispensable. Company timekeeper, it was he who took care to keep everyone on schedule and even negotiating and creating the scheduling grids (Appendix K, and discussed in the previous chapter). He also intervened frequently on the dancers’ behalf in advocating for their needs – especially while on tour. And it was also Brisson who videotaped the new dance material, chose music to accompany rehearsals (until the composed sound score was ready), and took charge of the rehearsal studio lighting (alternating between daylight, stage lights, and the overhead work lights). His role as rehearsal director was varied and multi-faceted.

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<sup>2</sup> A Montréal term for dancer, borrowed from the French equivalent *interprète*.

### 5.2.3 Dancers

At the time of the *Luna* project there were 10 dancers in the *O Vertigo* company. Six were interviewed individually and all appeared in fieldnotes. I also interviewed an apprentice dancer, and a replacement dancer who was with them on a temporary contract. This section begins with a synthesis of the dancers' characteristics and backgrounds. Several thematic discussions follow, about ideas that emerged as prominent topics from the data: the *métier* of dancing, the role of dancers and dancers' bodies. And finally, a short biographical profile is offered for each of the dancers with the key facts and events in their development towards and within the dance profession. A videotaped interview with each *Luna* dancer was included on the *Luna* CD-ROM (Appendix S).

#### 5.2.3.1 Socio-economic characteristics

Certain social characteristics of the dancers were compiled and charted (Table 5.2) from information they provided during interviews and in their biographies in programs: gender, age, number of years in professional dance and with *O Vertigo*, home city and national identity, perceived social class of their parents, nationality, educational background and dance background. Four of these identifying characteristics are discussed briefly below in order to begin a profile of this group of dancers as a whole.

(a) Age. *Luna* dancers ranged from 25 to 39 years of age. Some were recent company members near the beginning of their professional dancing careers, while others were approaching the usual retirement age for dancers (in their late 30's). (The only *Luna* artists over 40 years of age were the choreographer and rehearsal director.)

(b) Education. In terms of education, four of the *Luna* dancers had a university education (dance, arts or other), and the remaining 6 finished their

pre-professional training through dance academy programs of various kinds. This was a relatively high level of education as compared to the Montréal population in which only 13% had professional training and 25% a university education (Ville de Montréal, 2005).

(c) Nationality. The national identities of those dancers interviewed were expressed by them as Québécois(e), African-American, East German, Québécoise-Haitian and Vietnamese. Among the three not interviewed were an Australian (of Asian heritage), another American and an English Canadian. The dancers came as frequently from small towns as from large urban centers. All of the small-townners had moved to large cities in order to finish their pre-professional training.

(d) Social class. Perhaps the most intriguing social statistic to emerge from the interviews is the following: all but one dancer came either from poverty-stricken or from lower and middle class families (like their audiences for the large part as seen in the previous section). Two questions are implied, but not in the scope of this study. The first: why did so few of the *Luna* dancers, whether Québécois, English-Canadian and foreign-born, emerge from the well-to-do classes? Is it possible to presume that wealthy parents don't foster the métier of artist in their offspring? It is interesting to note that although these dancers were earning relatively low incomes (in terms of the population in general) but had acquired the education and artistic tastes of their wealthiest patrons. This makes it difficult to situate them squarely in the usual class continuum that is based strictly on income. And so a second question arises of whether dancers can be seen to constitute a particular class in and of themselves, in the earlier historical sense of class as a circle of acquaintance and associations. The dancers themselves will speak about their own ideas about their social class in the biographies that follow. In reality, the dancers live and work in a fluid movement across social classes.

### 5.2.3.2 The *métier* of dancing.

What are the parameters that distinguish a dance professional from a non-professional in the Montréal dance world? The official criteria of funding bodies mentioned above – peer recognition, special training, and professional performance experience – are only part of the story.

Referring to dance events in a general sense Ronström (1989) asked the question “what competence is required to dance?” (p. 25). As if in answer, after four years of dancing and touring with *O Vertigo*, Demers annotated her interview transcription with a newfound realization: “I still love dance with the same fire and passion [as before] but I can now conceive of it as a meticulous *métier*, like that of a clockmaker or jeweler”<sup>vii</sup> (I-MD). This perception is likely a testament to the detailed, complex aesthetic and working process of choreographer Laurin.

In a similar sense as did Kealiinohomoku (1976) when she distinguished part-time “dancers” from vocational “Dancers”<sup>3</sup>, choreographer Laurin spoke of two kinds of dancers: those who dance occasionally for their own pleasure (without professional ambitions) and those who choose the career in dance as their life’s work. Her own attitude towards dancing in her youth reflects a similar distinction:

You must be picked out early in the dance world, especially women, but you can always do it for pleasure. As for me, to not have been picked out wouldn’t have been too disappointing because I danced a lot for pleasure’s sake and continued to study at night. I had no career plan, that’s certain. You mustn’t aspire

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<sup>3</sup> In her dissertation, Kealiinohomoku (1976) proposed a cross-cultural distinction between the concept of “dancer” as someone who “is a dancer during a limited time and only while he is dancing” from that of the “Dancer” whose “title is not limited in time” and where “appropriate sanction and an ethno-domain specific to this point must be operative”(p. 23).



too early, in this kind of *métier*, to make a career in dance. The idea of passion must come first.<sup>viii</sup> (I-GL1)

Laurin is actually proposing that it might be important for career dancers to be certain that their emotional attachment to dancing is strongly established before aiming to make dancing a career. Besides the evident love for creativity, Laurin and several of the *O Vertigo* dancers also bore witness in the interviews to the emotional fulfillment they have received from audiences.

Montreal dancer-researcher Pamela Newell (2003) pointed to an increasing awareness in Montréal of the dancers' contribution to the dance when discussing the local French word for dancer: "In the 1980's, adopting the term *interprète* was an important political gesture for dancers in Québec. This change in terminology brought the public's attention to the process of interpretation behind a choreographed work" (p. 19). One sign of this recognition was demonstrated at the end of a performance of *Luna* when Laurin always left the first bow to the dancers alone. Also, dancers' biographies were always included in all programs and publicity materials, and previews and reviews of *Luna* almost always included mention of their names and qualities.

### 5.2.3.3 Dancer's perspectives on their role and work

How did the dancers describe their role in the creation and performance of *Luna* and the work of dancing for Laurin? Several dancers provided diverse verbs and metaphors to describe the work of being an *O Vertigo* dancer (in *Luna*): (a) using the body to translate reality into poetry, (b) the dancer as a tool for the choreographer, (c) cultivating one's inner garden, (d) finding out what goes on between the movements, (d) staying alive in the movement.

In the summer of 1998 as I was doing exploratory interviews, Demers was still a new member of *O Vertigo* and explained her understanding of the work of a dancer: "This work... I think it's the work of 'representation'. It's about trying to translate reality into a poetic mode. And it's [done] through the body." <sup>ix</sup> (I-MD) For Demers, the dancer's body was a conduit to transform the stuff of real life into poetry.

In another vein, Rose proposed the work-a-day concept, quite common in the contemporary dance milieu, of the dancer as a "tool" for the choreographer's use: "As a dancer, I was allowing myself just to be a tool, you know, and so 'O.K., what do you want me to do?' and I'd try to do it. [...]. It's about trying to express yourself through this movement that's given to you." He developed this idea further as we spoke by saying that when choreographers work with dancers in terms of a more creative exchange (as does Laurin), then "you're more than a tool, you're you." (I-DR) He further developed this thought by reflecting on the way in which the dancer's individual and artistic personality becomes part of the choreographic aesthetic when the choreographer calls upon their creativity.

Speaking specifically about the kind of creative interpretation that dancers are required to do with Ginette Laurin, long-time company dancer Rodrigue told me about the strong intuitive connection she has always felt with Laurin's "inner universe" which it is her "task to transmit." She also called to my attention that the dancers' work on the newly made choreography only began at the premiere performance, at which time a long process of change and maturation starts. She also elucidated an important metaphor that Laurin uses throughout her working process with the dancers, that of "cultivating one's inner garden." Laurin herself explained her garden metaphor as a kind of essence, in this way:

[...] we say that we are working on our 'interior garden.' It's something that the dancer will learn during the creative process.

He will try to find the essence of his role, or of the dance in general, and how to continue to cultivate that. And often in rehearsal, after 20 or 40 performances, normally they do about 80 performances of the same piece...then sometimes, we come back to the essence. We try to remember what we were thinking about when we created the section, what I was looking for, what I was referring to, what we were talking about, and what was that little spark that touched off the creation of that section. \* (I-GL2)

During my conversation with Rodrigue I remarked that Laurin doesn't seem to frequently give the dancers precise meanings and motivations to help with interpretation of the movements they are creating and learning. Rodrigue replied by explaining how psychological work of the inner garden metaphor functions to guide her choices about motivation :

We understand the ambiance, for example. It's up to us to nurture this garden here, which has a certain color, a certain odor. It's up to us to say what flowers don't grow there and so we don't put them in there. Do you understand? There is room for us to bring an interpretation, but it all remains within an ambiance, a precise kind of universe.<sup>xi</sup> (I-MR)

Dancers Riede and Barry concurred that creative process work with Laurin is a progression from the physical and psychological tasks of learning the movements and mastering their mechanics, to that of making a personal investment in the task of artistic interpretation. Barry put it this way: "She lets us work physically first to see what happens movement-wise. And if she is clear enough, she'll start to give us direction. We also propose things [...]" (I-AB). She later described the dancers' interpretive work as being left

on their own to “find out what goes on between movements.” She elaborated: “That’s sort of our work, and it always has been. We find a sort of rhythm, a timing, and a shading in what is happening in between” (I-AB).

In the notebook I had left in the studio for the dancers to read, Riede penned her thoughts about how she goes about her task as a dancer in creating *Luna*:

For me, personally, at first there is only the movement. Ginette gives only the movement, without any suggestions for meaning. So, for quite a while I am just trying to work at it technically. Then after a while Ginette might say: ‘Yes, I like the interpretation’, without me really knowing what I did. It seems to me Ginette likes things very natural, without any imposed interpretation. Only later on she gives more detailed directions, sometimes very specific, but mostly more vague. The real meaning behind every gesture is completely up to us, I feel. Once I have the basic technical part integrated into my body I start wondering about the meaning. I go by what it means for myself and what I would like to express, even if sometimes it is only the joy to move. In some sequences I search for meanings for every single gesture, but that takes a really long time and somehow never ends, even when we have been performing the piece for quite a while, since I keep changing or clarifying the meaning to stay interested and alive in the movement. (Written comment by Antje Riede, date unknown, fall 2000.)

Riede’s account of a creative process reconfirms that Laurin engages her dancers to “be themselves”, as Rose would say, to invent personal variations

on the given movements and to formulate their own interpretations within the parameters of their “inner garden.”

#### 5.2.3.4 Dancers’ bodies

Not surprisingly, the data revealed copious references to the bodies of dancers, bodies that were at the epicenter of the *Luna* dance event. After all, at the moment of performance it was the dancers’ bodies that were on display for audiences and on which all attention was focused.

The appearance, health, and physical states of the dancers’ bodies were frequent themes that arose throughout the interviews with *Luna* dancers and fieldnotes about what they said and did. As well as insider views from the dancers themselves, comments about dancers’ bodies were offered up in critiques by dance writers and through remarks by audience members.

Within choreographer Laurin’s intuitive Automatist approach to dance-making, movements were composed directly onto and with the dancers’ bodies rather than the choreographer’s. Inside the dance studio and backstage with *Luna*, the dancers, the choreographer and rehearsal director spoke of their bodies as an “instrument” or “tool” to be trained, mastered, conditioned, and controlled.

During a public interview with Szporer at Jacob’s Pillow, Laurin explained, “I like my dancers to look like ordinary people, all sizes and ages” (I-PS). In the interviews with Barras (I-HB1) she elaborated on this conscious choice of hiring a variety of physical types, adding that she didn’t want her company to have the uniformity of a *corps de ballet* and that she has realized that an exceptionally tall man, for instance, could enrich her choreography and make it more interesting. During fieldwork I indeed observed that, unlike the uniformity imposed on dancers in the classical ballet (Wulff,

1998), *O Vertigo* dancers embodied individualistic styles through their clothing and grooming, both in the rehearsal studio practice clothes and when fully costumed onstage. They were not only of different heights, body types, shapes, but also of various ethnicities. Through the morning training regimes they chose for themselves (for Laurin didn't impose a company class), they actually shaped their bodies to suit their personal tastes and needs, in consultation with the choreographer and her needs. The dancers' preferences in personal appearance became somewhat modified onstage, as costume designers and make-up artists imposed on their bodies the designs they had conceived for *Luna*.

As for views of dancers' bodies from non-dancer participants, audience and critics often spoke of the dancers as attractive. But at least one critic judged them harshly: "the company seems to be not very well trained and some of the dancers seem to be bogged down by considerable overweight" (Schmidt, 2001). It was clear that certain physical standards concerning body type and weight were in operation, even if not explicitly required by the choreographer. Like athletes, their bodies were strengthened and toned by the intense physical work of dancing. Expressed admiration for their youthful, athletic appearances was a recurring motif in the *Luna* audience focus groups, and even a distinct motive for coming to see dance for some audience members.

The health of the dancers was an on-going, recurring concern throughout the event. I discovered that the *O Vertigo* dance company provided some of the necessary medical insurance for injuries, and encouraged individual training programs, in response to their dancers' needs. Laurin regularly invited guest teachers into her studio to teach a company class. Dancers' injuries were the outcome of the highly physical demands of this kind of work in which abnormal stresses were put on the body and exhaustion was a continuous challenge. Chronic and on-the-spot injuries were often in view during my fieldwork and I occasionally took an



inventory. On one day for instance I asked dancers about their injuries and observed: toes with tape wrapped around them, split skin on foot soles, lumbar pain, infection on a foot arch, and a left groin muscle pulled (FN: 11-10-00). Other days yielded a similar list of dance injuries. The reasons were numerous and as I discovered included: chronic weaknesses, floor surfaces that provided either too much or not enough traction, but especially the creative process in which “There are frequent false and inefficient moves that cause dancers to wince with discomfort as they learn the best way to coordinate them” (FN: 10-4-00). Some injuries were serious enough to require medical assistance, others were discretely nursed and dressed as dancers worked. Each dancer practiced a physical routine during rehearsals and performances that favored healing. Laurin remained attentive and sympathetic to her dancers’ physical limits. For instance, I observed her stopping rehearsal routinely if someone appeared to have been injured, sometimes asking dancers if they were ready and able to continue with a demanding run-through. Rose and Barry told me that she had allowed them to take time off without the loss of their contract when they suffered debilitating injuries.

The demands of dancing in studio and onstage also put the *O Vertigo* dancer’s bodies in particular physical and psychological states of being. One result of the physical intensity of dance work was an experience that Riede described as “feeling alive” in her body, as if she were “opened up” when dancing (I-AR). This heightened sense of aliveness was also claimed by many of the dancers as one of the motives that keeps them dancing. During the performance itself, there is the extraordinary heat and brightness of the stage lights to contend with. About this physical challenge, Barry remarked to me: “[...] the body develops something to adjust to this intensity [of stage light and heat]” (FN: 9-5-00).

The phenomenon of “stage presence” was described by several dancers as a kind of heightened state of being in the body and mind,

pleasurable for some and stressful for others. For instance, as described in Chapter IV section 4.9.2 and during the pilot project, I observed this phenomenon from backstage at an *O Vertigo* performance (not *Luna*). Demers walked slowly towards the stage from the wings, transforming her energy from that of waiting to entering. It was like an intensifying, sharpening, “thickening” of the mind and body’s energies. I glanced outward towards the brightly lit stage and was already beginning to feel the heat of the stage lights. I described it as a glowing, charged space, separate from but intensely observed by about six hundred pairs of eyes (FN: 8-18-00). From my vantage point I suddenly realized that one key to perceiving the changes in the dancers’ bodies and minds as they performed, and recuperated from performing, was during the moment – only a matter of seconds -- when they made the passage between backstage to onstage and back again.

#### 5.2.3.4 Biographical profiles

The following nine capsule profiles of nine full-time *O Vertigo* dancers (Appendix R), one replacement dancer, and one apprentice dancer integrate data. For the three dancers who were not available to be interviewed, an excerpt from the biographical entries on the company website were used to completed their dance biographies. Through these life stories it is possible to catch a glimpse into the dancers’ lives, and most significantly the conditions and environments in which they were raised and came to be a dancer. They also contains clues to the kinds of meanings that dancing came to hold in their lives, and as to how they formulated the aesthetic views over time that guided their understanding of dance.

*Profile #1: Mélanie Demers, company dancer.* Mélanie is a cultural mixture of Haitian and Canadian, but never knew her Haitian father. Her mother was of modest means but always encouraged her career choice of dancer, declaring that her daughter's happiness was the most important thing. Demers remembers having always been "a mover," dancing socially in clubs. And this desire to be an artist and to dance channeled her into the contemporary dance profession because, as she put it, of the opportunity to do so that Canadian society had offered to her. She trained first at the *École de danse de Québec* in Québec City. Then for the next 3 years she studied at *Les Ateliers de danse moderne de Montréal* where she received pre-professional training in dance technique, somatics, interpretation and also did some choreography. She was in her 6th year as a dance professional, both choreographing and dancing, when she became an *O Vertigo* company member in 1998.

*Profile #2 : David Rose, company dancer.* Rose is African-American and was raised in Philadelphia. He once intimated that he feels equally kin to both his parent's cultures: Caucasian American and Afro-American. He was a high school wallflower who "wanted to dance, but there was, like, this certain step that you had to do properly in the right way and my body didn't care to fit into that form." So he took John Hines' ballet class as a hobby until he couldn't afford it anymore, his father refusing to support his dance training. So the people at the dance studio asked him to be in the end-of-the-season show in lieu of payment, and so he began performing. As an engineering major in university, he joined the "moderny" dance club. One day he auditioned for the training program with the Phildanco dance company. Despite an intervening stint in the army and a sprained ankle, the director took him into the program and soon after in 1985, into her company. Soon after entering the professional dance world, he dropped out of college. Rose later came to Canada to dance with the Winnipeg Contemporary

Dancers, and he then moved to Montréal to perform with choreographer Jean-Pierre Perreault. As his website biography proclaimed, "His characteristic combination of mellowness and energy drew the attention of Ginette Laurin, who recruited him in 1996" ([www.cam.org/-overtigo/html](http://www.cam.org/-overtigo/html), 2001) and he has been dancing with *O Vertigo* ever since.

*Profile #3 : Kha Nguyen, replacement dancer.* Nguyen is Vietnamese, grew up in Canada from the age of 7 and his parents were very poor. He began his studies in the pure sciences, what he called the more "natural path" in terms of his parents' choice for him, his disposition and aptitudes. But he threw himself into the visual arts, and took a modern dance class after their divorce when he was 20 years of age, because "my father had left, and I could [now] do what I wanted to do." <sup>xii</sup> He continued taking dance classes at CEGEP, and finally auditioned for the professional training program at *Les ateliers de danse moderne*. At first he didn't pass the audition, and so took a year of preparatory technique classes to be finally accepted. He completed the entire three-year program, and began dancing with younger choreographers, doing some of his own dance creating, and dancing for larger companies in special projects. Preferring for the moment not to join a large company full time, he was pleased by Laurin's offer of a temporary contract to replace dancer Rose on paternity leave, in the last few months of rehearsal and first performances and tours of *Luna* in 2000 and 2001. As a replacement dancer he needed to "fit into a role that another dancer created, and this is quite different from 'owning the movement' through a creative process" (FN: 9-16-00). Nguyen was pleased by the temporary opportunity to work with *O Vertigo* because he "likes what they do [...]. But [he added] the structure of a company in itself, on an everyday basis, doesn't suit him." <sup>xiii</sup>

*Profile #4 : Patrick Lamothe, company dancer.* Lamothe grew up in the small town of Acton Vale in Québec, raised in a poor single parent family by his mother. Since he was a young child, he had loved creating characters like those he had seen in large theatrical productions. Despite the lack of support from his mother who found the métier of dancing to be too dangerous and financially insecure, he decided while still in CEGEP at 19 years of age that he would one day be onstage where he could live intensely and communicate strong emotions. He completed his professional training at *Les ateliers de danse moderne*, and then was hired to choreograph for a CEGEP dance troupe. He also began dancing for young choreographers and making his own work, and never imagined being in a large dance company. One day he was invited to an *O Vertigo* audition. He entered the company in 2000, the newest member at the time of this study. Laurin asked him to cut his shoulder-length blonde hair and to begin ballet training when he joined. I observed him progressively adapting his rebellious views to the company culture and to Laurin's aesthetic.

*Profile #5: Marie-Claude Rodrigue, company dancer.* Rodrigue was born to a poor family in a small village in the Beauce (southeastern Québec). When still a child, her mother became deaf and so she invented a personal physical "language" that her mother could comprehend. Two other things that she claimed tempered her inclination towards dancing : doing gymnastics with her mother along with a television animator, and ice skating with her parents as soon as she could walk. Her first glimpse of a dance performance was during a visit to her cousin in a larger town who took her to the cinema to the movie "Flashdance." By the age of eight, she began training for competition skating and became a young champion. Too poor to hire teachers, she would imitate the best skaters, and along with her mother would choreograph her own routines. But by age 18, she realized that to get further she would need to pay instructors. Lacking money, she

one day burst out emotionally: "I had this anger inside me because I saw that it was only children of rich parents who were able to do it. And so I said to myself : THAT'S IT! I'm going to dance with my feet on the floor and it won't cost a cent! " <sup>xiv</sup>. She told her CEGEP career counselor that she wanted to dance, who after some research directed her to the *Université du Québec à Montréal's* dance program. With no dance experience her résumé was at first rejected, but she went to the auditions anyway looking like a country girl lost in the big city, as she put it. The dance professors watched as she performed her own dance composition (like the protagonist in "Flashdance"! ) and she was accepted. She chose the teaching option and finally became a graduate. As she did her university studies she also took extra dance classes, as if to accelerate her training, and after graduation completed three more years at *Les Ateliers de danse moderne*. About this period she exclaimed "I was really a maniac [about dancing]! " <sup>xv</sup>. She then spent a year in France and Spain on a study grant, and one day a dance teacher recommended her to Laurin. She is now in her 15<sup>th</sup> year as a dance professional. With 12 years at *O Vertigo* she was one of the more senior company members. Rodrigue's company role extended beyond dancing new works, and as I entered the field she was just being sent to South America to supervise the remounting of Laurin's previous choreography on another company of dancers.

*Profile #6 : Antje (Anna) Riede, company dancer.* (Antje is her original German name, but she uses Anna now.) Riede grew up in East Germany under a communist regime, without any notion of economic class. Her father was a teacher who had students from his classroom dancing in a children's dance company. Antje also performed with them regularly. She was only three, but he sent her to experience dancing which was "a bit of ballet, folklore and free." Her mother traveled with the company and sewed their costumes. When she was 14 her family managed with great difficulty



to move to her grandmother's house in West Germany, but when she was 17 the wall dividing East and West Germany came down. But for a hiatus from 12 to 14 years old, she continued dancing in different dance companies, discovered the catharsis of doing dance improvisation in a school in Freiburg, and then completed a 3-year program in dance therapy to "free herself from her past." At 21 she was off to New York City to see if she "was good enough" and whether she really wanted to dance. After two years in the big city, a friend insisted with vehemence that she take the *O Vertigo* summer workshop where she fell in love with the company after the first week of work. At the end of the course Laurin "came to [me] and she said that she really liked the way I was moving and that she was looking for a new dancer and if I would come to the audition." She went back to New York for a few months afterwards, trained really hard, and ended up joining the company in 1998.

*Profile #7 : Anne Barry, company dancer.* Barry grew up in "very comfortable" economic circumstances in Deep River, Ontario. She described her background as "very English, very scientific, very intellectual." Her small home town was dominated by career scientists, and it wasn't until she was 18 that she thought of dancing as a possible career choice when her father told her that she would always dance spontaneously around the kitchen. During her second year at university when she was 20 years old, her life was still without a clear direction and she began taking dance classes at the *Groupe de la Place Royale* studios for her own enjoyment. It was finally the combination of her first heartbreak, the "go with your heart's desire" philosophy of author Ayn Rand, and her dance teacher's insistence, that pushed her towards professional training in dance. She went to study at the Toronto Dance Theatre, the only school that would accept her at such an advanced age. What she found there were many other women her own age who were "coming into a change," and together they rented another studio

and did “a lot of creative work.” Those first years of training were “a way of exploring and discovering herself within the dance” and of emotional flourishing. She continued her training in London, New York and Paris. Her professional life as a dancer began with *Montréal Danse* and *Compagnie Marie Chouinard*. She joined *O Vertigo* in 1991, and at the time of *Luna* was one of the longest-standing members of the company along with Rodrigue and Gould. She was also the oldest dancer in the company at the time of this study in 2001, and was given a key solo in the *Luna* choreography as the looming figure in the moon dress that was to appear as an emblematic image for the piece on the first posters (photo 10).

*Profile #8 : Isabelle Greaves, company apprentice.* Greaves was raised in a middle class family on *Ile Perrot*, a suburban community just off the west end of Montréal Island. She began doing gymnastics at seven years old to the point of entering competitions, but hated being judged. So she turned to the less competitive métier of artistic dance. Over the next three years, her training began with ballet and *ballet-jazz* at a local studio and as a performer in the studio dance troupe. It was through conversation with a friend who was a university dance student that she realized dance could be her major. She completed a bachelor’s degree in dance, and her goal at the moment of our interview was simply to be able to dance in the profession, without knowing yet where and with whom. Laurin noticed her during one of *O Vertigo*’s summer workshops and called to ask her to be a teaching assistant with her for a university class. Through this close rapport she was able to negotiate a temporary, non-salaried position for herself as company apprentice during the time of the *Luna* event, as long (said Laurin) as she was able to work autonomously. In her role as company apprentice I observed her acting as a surrogate partner for an absent dancer, executing technical lighting cues during rehearsal, learning all of the dancers’ roles and

participating fully in company life. But she was never, alas, called upon to perform onstage in *Luna*.

*Profile #9 : Kenneth Gould, company dancer. (Not interviewed.)* Gould was one of the founding members of *O Vertigo*, and a former life partner of Laurin. He studied ballet and modern dance techniques, and danced with the Brian Webb Dance Company in the Western Canadian city of Edmonton, and the Dancemakers company in Toronto. He also created and toured his own choreography, and from 1988 to 1997 taught dance in a Montréal CEGEP. Many times I saw him boldly pressing forward his own ideas and views while always ceding to Laurin's authority, and frequently provoking laughter in his role as the well-loved company clown. I noted in my fieldbook that Ken clearly had a special role and place in the company, having been Laurin's life partner during seven years and the *O Vertigo* dancer with the longest standing of all. I noticed that he always deferred to her controlling vision, even when he was only questioning small details and ideas. He was vocal, playful and warm in his interventions during rehearsals and often made everyone laugh (FN: 10-20-00).

*Profile #10: Chi Long, company dancer. (Not Interviewed.)* Chi is visibly Asian (photo 7), but with English as her mother tongue because born and raised in Australia. She began dancing professionally in her home country with the Canberra Dance Theatre. In 1991 she moved to Montréal where she immediately joined *O Vertigo* while still continuing to dance with various independent choreographers onstage and in dance films. Although vividly playful in her behavior and dress, Long was a discrete and introspective kind of dancer. It was during the touring of *Luna* that (much to my surprise) she ended her 10 years working with Laurin to join another large Montréal dance company, *MC2 Extase* directed by choreographer Marie Chouinard.

*Profile #11: Donald Weikert, company dancer. (Not interviewed.)* Like Rose, Weikert is an east coast American, but was raised in Boston. He moved to Montréal at first to study biology, but ended up choosing to dance. After studies of ballet and modern dance, he began his career with *O Vertigo*. He soon moved on to dance with Québécois company *Lalala Human Steps*, only to return in 1997 to work again with *O Vertigo*. Weikert served as the “company intellectual” during *Luna*’s creation, applying his university science education to the artistic needs of Laurin. During creative processes of *Luna* he was called upon to search for texts in the field of astrophysics, bringing forward texts some of which later became part of the *Luna* choreographic composition and soundscore.

#### 5.2.4 Artistic collaborators

For each new choreographic project, a team of artistic collaborators is chosen by Laurin to work closely with her in developing the costumes, lights, stage and visual design and props for the choreographic creation itself. For *Luna*, these collaborators designed the sound score, visual imagery and stage lighting, and costumes. All of these close collaborators stated unequivocally that their function in the creation of *Luna* was to accompany and aid the choreographer or as Morgenthelar said, they were just “braining in” with the company and: “The way it is, the company’s structure, it’s not that you’re part of a collective. It’s [Laurin’s] company. And we’re contributing to work to create her vision. That’s something that has to be clear.” (I-AM) But interestingly enough, he also affirmed his belief that in the end, it is really the audience who is his client and for whom he is working. (I-AM)

There were also more peripheral artistic personnel in this “network of cooperation” hired in by *O Vertigo*, like graphic artists and writers, who

participated in creating marketing materials for the *Luna* event. Examples are artist Rober Racine who penned a poetic commentary for the *Luna* program (Appendix F), Catherine Caron who designed the website, DIA Multimedia who produced the CD-ROM (Appendix S), and photographers Benoît Acquin, Laurent S. Zeigler and George Anderhut who created the images used on the posters and in press materials and later on in newspaper articles (photos 10, 11 and 12). I also spoke with Danièle Gingras, the designer of the CD ROM (Appendix S), while she was working for Dia Multimédia. Not only did this electronic press kit fulfill its practical role as a publicity tool, but Gingras told me that as a graphic work of art it had won the Grafika prize for innovation<sup>4</sup>. These participants were encountered only briefly, or not at all, in the *O Vertigo* studios in the course of fieldwork. But the artifacts I collected bore witness to the images and texts on paper, in film and in electronic form that they created for purposes of publicizing and promoting *Luna* to the public at large and to the expressive specialists, especially in the period just leading up to the live performance. These images and texts became part of the framing devices, as Foster (1986) called them, which both aroused expectations and influenced interpretations of the choreography by spectators and expressive specialists. In my work as dance presenter, I think of these kinds of texts and images as "clues" or "keys" to choreographic meaning.

I met the lighting, sound and costume designers in the *O Vertigo* studios and theaters infrequently, on only 8 out of the more than 70 sessions that I attended. And five out of eight of these visits by collaborators came in December 2000, towards the end of the creative process period. On the other hand, certain stage props, materials and theatrical costumes, the visible results of their designs, began accumulating early on in the rehearsal studios. These elements proved crucial to choreographic choices: the standing lenses,

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<sup>4</sup>From a phone conversation with Danièle Gingras on May 10, 2005.

the moon-like dresses, fragments of the soundscore, wireless microphones, computer-controlled projections. And so it seems that much of the negotiating, consultation and creative brainstorming between the choreographer and her artistic collaborators took place outside of the rehearsal studio itself.

The following descriptive accounts of the three main artistic collaborators for *Luna* have been assembled from the data of two interviews (with light/ visual and sound designers), a text on the costume designer by Guylaine Massoutre (1999) that was based on an interview, program notes from the Montréal performance (Appendix F) and notes from field observations and informal conversations with them.

#### 5.2.4.1 Composer and sound designer

The conception of a sound score for *Luna* began with the story of an American composer named Darden Smith, from a Texas university whose intention it was to co-commission and present the final work. I interviewed him during the pilot project in Jacob's Pillow, where he and Laurin had allotted some time for an initial dialogue together. He told me that he was self-taught, intuitive, and had invented his own notation. (FN: 8-17-00). Back in Montréal, I ran into Smith once again at the *O Vertigo* studios, where I witnessed a somewhat tense exchange between choreographer and composer, tinged I thought with sarcasm (FN: 9-20-00). Two days later at a dance performance I met dancer Demers who told me that Smith had been sent away permanently, earlier that week. When the dancers came in for Tuesday's rehearsal, Laurin announced simply that Smith would "no longer be there with them." Demers confessed to me that "it was a little difficult for her that there was no discussion about it, nor the chance for them to say goodbye." (FN: 9-22-00) I found out later that when Smith left the project,



the Texas university commission and performance opportunity were consequently cancelled. It became clear to me from this incident that Laurin was fully in charge of the creative vision.

One month later I met Jean Gaudreau in the *O Vertigo* studios. It was he who, along with Richard Bélanger form the "sound design" company Larsen Lupin. In the *Luna* program notes (Appendix F) Larsen Lupin described themselves as a duo formed six years ago with several identities: musician, sound designer, sound engineer who create sound landscapes and original compositions in various domains of the performing arts. Gaudreau spoke of his work for *Luna* as that of "finding and collating sound." He explained that Laurin had found herself with a pressing deadline to complete the sound score after dismissing Smith, and so had called him in to work with her. At present he was spending a lot of time looking for sound propositions in music stores. I noticed that day how clear Laurin was about what kinds of sound effects she needed by way of comments like "That's too much, too much beat <sup>xvi</sup> " (FN: 10-26-00) .

Laurin explained that she and Gaudreau had worked together on musical montages and music recording for many of her choreographies. Laurin elaborated their current working method together on *Luna* in this way:

I come with musical propositions, but they're very incomplete. I come with propositions to give atmosphere, ambiance. I had already found certain musical pieces for certain sequences, and for him, it was a matter of completing [the choices]. He did a particular kind of research, sometimes he will create sounds for the piece. And, in the end, he assembles all of that together. <sup>xvii</sup>  
(I-GL2.)

And so in the end, the sound and music for *Luna* was an ambient soundscore in support of the choreography, rather than the negotiation of a

musical composer's artistic vision with that of Laurin. The final score was a complex assembly of sounds from various sources and musical genres. This score was overlaid with recordings of the dancers singing and reciting texts, and integrated with their live amplified vocal sounds in performance.

#### 5.2.4.2 Visual designer

Axel Morgenthelar is Swiss German, born to a father who was a practicing artist in many mediums and a mother who had taught weaving for 30 years. Despite this artistic household, he found himself in his teens at first fascinated by electronics (and mathematics also), which he studied in a public trade school in Switzerland. In searching for a creative outlet, he took private music classes to play the saxophone, "an instrument [that] really fit into what I was listening to. [...]" He began exploring multiple aspects of musical production like performing, organizing and selling music. But he then became attracted to theater, and attended a conservatory to study acting. One of his professors asked him to participate in his show by designing the lights, and he started to think about visual creation in the performing arts. He joined forces with an architect friend, and one project led to another. And so, as he told it, "one day I woke up and I said 'Well, I'm a lighting designer'" even though he was the only one in his home town of Bern in 1985 doing that kind of work freelance, who was not an employee of a large theatre. There were no teachers at the time for other than the "techniques" of lighting, and so he taught himself with only books and other people's works as references. In the fourth year of a dance festival in Switzerland for which he was technical director, *O Vertigo* "came by" and he "really liked the show, touched on the level of how the music, the lights and the performers were all connected." He had also visited Montréal and was touched by its charm. By way of a personal connection he met and began working with Laurin. He

was hired 10 years ago as her visual designer, and was technical director of the company as well for the first couple of years.

By the time of *Luna*, his sixth collaboration with Laurin, Morgenthelard had come to call himself in the program notes a "lighting and visual designer with multiple talents as scenographer, light designer and multimedia theatrical artist." He described his work as "exploring new visual, architectural and theatrical concepts through the raw material of light, as well as such media as video and film." He began by doing design with light only to realize that "the stuff I do is so dependent on the surfaces where the lights are falling." From his background in interior design he became involved on the "canvasses where the lights fall", i.e. the scenography (curtains, dance floor, etc.) and even the costumes. In this way he realized that he had "a much greater palette of expression", and defines his aesthetic as "a dialogue between material and light." He contrasted his contemporary vision with that of designers of more traditional historical theater with a kind of metaphoric artistic ethos about space: "I'm more interested in the boundaries where we have more ephemeral space and [where] you have this kind of fine dialogue between transparency, translucence, and this kind of ephemeral space." And when he describes using immaterial haze with which to create "virtual walls with light," I am reminded at once of both Surrealist artists' dreamscapes and new technological experimentation. He also practices as a freelance designer who makes between ten and fifteen creations a year, a situation which he speaks of in a positive light as "giving the [*O Vertigo*] company enough outside influence to create something unique every time." And he comes to each new creation in a state of mind he called "well-structured amnesia" about the previous piece, because after many year of collaboration he felt that "the danger of repeating oneself becomes great."

His relationship with current technical director Jocelyn Proulx appeared to be particularly significant, as I observed them engaged in intense conversations several times. Proulx confirmed the nature of this

exchange when he told me that Axel "dreams in technicolor. He does his work as a creator without constraints. [...] And so I bring him down to earth, finding a way to move in the sense of his ideas [...] within budgets and production constraints given to me by my bosses" <sup>xviii</sup> (I-JP).

As for his collaborative working process with Laurin and so his role in creating *Luna*, Morgenthelar believes that their intuitive exchange of ideas benefits from a confidence that has grown between them over the years. He feels that it is only in long-term relationships, like the one he has evolved with Laurin, that it is possible to "get to know the finer points of what the person's private, poetic environment is, so you get to know, to express their desire of what to put on a stage." He even co-authored the *Luna* project proposal along with Laurin, developing a technical section about the integration of new technologies and especially the optical lenses and video projections (Appendix I).

I was present the day Morgenthelar and Laurin began to work on the video projection of images on Barry's moon skirt. I recorded details of their temperate, seasoned negotiations, which Morgenthelar characterized as "an improvisation." Ginette began by talking to him about the resolution of the projection and the need for darkness. Together they watched images chosen by Axel stream by in silence, 35 to 45 seconds long apiece: stars, waves, birds flocking, volcanic-like fire, etc. Laurin responded "It works, it doesn't work, or not bad" for each. Then she said "And what if we went with the images like that, but shorter, 30 seconds?" Morgenthelar proposed his view about which ones he liked and explained why. Laurin then responded, "Take out all that is pale." Morgenthelar said that the beginning one in black and white was good perhaps" but not at the beginning" <sup>xix</sup>. He said he wanted now to see the images with the accompanying sound. (FN: 12-18-00) And this was the way in which, after all the years, they managed to mesh their aesthetic sensibilities.

#### 5.2.4.3 Costume designers

Denis Lavoie formed the Trac Costume company with fellow dancer Carmen Alie in 1986, devoted to costume design and creation for the performing arts. By the end of my fieldwork in 2002, they had decided to finally split up the company and to work independently. In the course of our interview, Lavoie told me how he came from the northern Lac St-Jean region of Québec at 19 years of age to pursue studies in Montréal. After taking off again on his "youth trip", as he calls it, traveling to Vancouver on the Canadian west coast, he returned with the conviction that he wanted to be a dancer. He became a subsidized apprentice for three years with the *Eddy Toussaint Ballet-Jazz* dance company, and then earned his B.A. in dance at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*. After dancing professionally with the *Montréal Danse* company and trying his hand at five choreographies, he decided in his 30's to shift his career to costume design. It came as no surprise, his mother having been a seamstress and "raising him in her fabric store."

Although possessing no formal training in design, he had begun even while dancing to "draw what he envisioned on the moving body." Lavoie further explained that he visualized each costume as "having a story of its own." Over the years, his aesthetic preferences had led him to an aesthetic style that he described as colorful, employing natural fabrics and those that suggest depth, and having light reflective properties. (Massoutre, 1999, p. 152)

Lavoie was clear about the dynamics of his relationship to Laurin and his role as costumer: he is completely at the service of the choreographer and her vision. As he put it, "she is the master!" But he further nuanced his working method with her when describing two possible avenues of

collaboration that he has experienced with various creators. In the first, he worked in parallel, in the same direction, as the choreographer's ideas. In the second way of working he would superimpose a completely different set of ideas by way of the costumes, which has brought different layers of meaning to the creator's work. In the case of *Luna*, he first attended rehearsals and allows many images to emerge that he suggested to her. She kept only a few. He gradually began to make decisions even while the work was being created, with the intention of following the choreographer's ideas as they developed even at the times when they were more or less clear. (Massoutre, 1999, p. 154)

For the *Luna* project, he and Alie designed the much publicized moon-shaped white dresses (Photos 8 and 10, Appendix S video sequences and photos) that Lavoie calls the "theatrical dresses" (*robes-théâtre*). Their creative designs needed to take into account parameters given to them by the visual designer and choreographer, an example of the kind of interdependence enacted among *Luna*'s artistic collaborators and their aesthetic outlooks. These parameters included the consideration that video images would be projected onto the exterior surface and also that live video projections of dancing from underneath the same skirt, would be seen by the audience. The second set of costumes were more like individualistic everyday clothing, with two different layers for each dance, one in neutral tans and beiges and the other brightly colored, that they would remove in the course of the dance. The idea of the costume changes was an outcome of his philosophy that in a one-hour work, it was necessary to have elements that would refresh the gesture and enliven the piece by causing it to be seen "in another light." In referring to this set of costumes, Lavoie told me how he needed to follow the process of creation through studio visits, watch how the choreographer sees the dancers in their choreographic universe, and how the dancers dress themselves in rehearsals. By paying attention to all of these small things, he has succeeded in making costumes that are well liked by both choreographer and dancers. In the case of these *Luna* costumes, he and Alie produced



detailed technical designs for the costume shop in Lucerne, Switzerland where they were to be actually cut and sewn during a two-week residency. But because the costume shop staff at the *lucernertheater* weren't used to making dance clothes and rigid in their attitudes [towards the dancers' suggestions], "the cuts and fit were completely wrong with not enough fabric under the arm to facilitate movement." Carmen Alie traveled overseas to Lucern to join them, and had to make many of the bodices and sleeves completely over again. (FN: 3-1-01)

### 5.3 *O Vertigo's* personnel

The dance company artists were supported in their creative and performing activities by extensive "networks of cooperative people" to prepare and present the dance event. Certain characteristics of those interviewed and part of a student focus group, are summarized in Tables 5.3, 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

This section also includes a brief discussion of 10 out-of-town dance students (professional dancers) who were part of a focus group and who were attending *O Vertigo's* 2001 summer workshop and so learning choreography from *Luna*. Teaching these summer workshop students was one of the company's important supplementary activities, bringing in extra income and employment for the company and dancers and providing a pool of dancers from which to identify candidates for the company.

*O Vertigo* dance had its own executive, communications, and administrative directors along with several assistants, as did each of the theaters in which they performed. These administrative teams worked in various capacities to manage the overall event project, market and publicize the performances, budget and fundraise for the dance company and venue, work with members of the boards of directors, widen audience interest and

carry out related community projects, act as agents to develop and plan tours, manage the audience at the performances ("house managers"), run the box office and make ticket sales and reservations, and to do the general secretarial work in the front offices. The technical staffs included technical directors, their assistants, lighting, sound and electronic media technicians, a dance company costume mistress, and other stage crew as required.

The descriptive sections below will delineate the backgrounds and roles of those who were interviewed by way of example. These were *O Vertigo's* executive director, a member of their board of directors, an audience development consultant at the Auditorium Dufour, and the *O Vertigo* technical director. Within their profiles I will also briefly discuss what other members of their staff and crew said and did, working from information gleaned in the field.

### 5.3.1 Executive director and his staff

*O Vertigo's* executive director Bernard Lagacé (Photo 4) proved to be a friendly but fairly private man, even though I have known him professionally for over a decade, providing minimal answers to my questions and little information about the company's budget. (As mentioned earlier, he denied access to financial details except for a 1-page summary of *Luna's* project budget, Appendix M). He did agree to hold a face-to-face interview in which he told some of his dance life story and administrative visions, offered friendly casual conversation spontaneously on several occasions, but didn't go into depth about his art world views. His reluctance to expose the dance company's budget to public view I can only surmise (not wanting to appear as prying) as a protective gesture, thinking that it could lead to some kind of criticism by the community.

His early training was in interior design. Lagacé in fact was "going into architecture" when he encountered choreographer Pierre-Paul Savoie of the *PPS danse* company. At first invited to design sets for a new piece, he gradually became involved in the administrative processes. When a choreography of *PPS danse* called *Bagne* proved successful with audience and presenter, he began building a network of contacts for touring the work. In 1999 he launched his own business to represent several local choreographers called *Montréal en orbite*. In May 2000, just a year before our interview and as the *Luna* project was just beginning, he received a call from Laurin asking him to join her company. "And this is how I came to sit in this chair [of the executive director for *O Vertigo*]." (I-BL)

Lagacé described his management role to me as "making sure that Ginette would get the conditions, optimal conditions to create what she had in mind." As he put it, his tasks include creating a plan, formulating a budget, finding "the right partners to make it happen," and then negotiating necessary budget revisions with Laurin. He described it yet another way when he said "I see my role within that project [*Luna*] as being a facilitator somehow to accommodate all the artistic needs with a reality aspect [for which we need] to establish parameters." He also felt that an important goal for him as the "[creation of] bridges between the administrative and the artistic elements of 'this big corporation'." Lagacé praised the cooperative and flexible attitude of Laurin, as he had experienced it in these negotiating processes. For instance, he revealed to me that the loss of a grant from the Langlois Foundation led to a "less impressive" (as he put it) technology component for *Luna*, requiring a revision of the artistic possibilities. And one day he exclaimed that he couldn't wait for the dancers to come home from touring so that he could get into the studio, in direct contact with the dancing, to inspire his promotional efforts and his work of "trying to put [*Luna*] on the stage of the world." In an emotional burst of support for considering the

artistic process as the main function of the dance company, Lagacé exclaimed, "The [choreographic] work is [*O Vertigo's*] raison d'être...it is!" (I-BL)

As I entered the field, *O Vertigo's* administrative staff, including the executive director, had been recently hired. The administrative director managed accounting and contracts, the director of communications took on all tasks related to public relations and publicity, and the receptionist provided general secretarial services. The original receptionist Chloé Myers, and the next one hired Corinne Faucher, were required to answer the phone and to operate a buzzer for the front door. They were the initial, frontline contact for visitors and callers – veritable gatekeepers. Both were always cooperative and eager to help me in my search for information. One quiet afternoon, Faucher confided to me her life story in the arts. She revealed with pride that she had studied contortionism and trapeze at the local circus school, eventually teaching the techniques at a summer camp. One day when she began to gain weight and also realized "the toll the circus life takes on the body," and so she decided to reorient her nascent performing arts career into arts management (FN: 6-7-00).

The "official" gatekeeper who was assigned to negotiating with me in the beginning was administrative director Evelyne Follain, soon replaced by Eric-Abel Baland. Although I didn't have much contact with her in the end, it was she who initially discussed my consent form with the company and the conditions for my access to the offices and studios. Another staff member, communications director Sylvie Ménard, developed the visual concepts and distributed the *Luna* press kits, "stats" (audience attendance statistics) and archived press texts – and cheerfully gave me access to any materials and archives I requested.

### 5.3.2 Board of directors' president-founder

*O Vertigo* was established in 1984 as a legal entity (first as *Léveillé danse* and then *Léveillé-Laurin danse* along with choreographer Daniel Léveillé) in the apartment home of arts "animateur" Claude Gosselin. He served as its founding president and lent them the charter of his own contemporary arts organization as a basis for formulating the legal description the fledgling company. He remains a member of the board of directors to this day, a volunteer group of directors from various sectors of the artistic and business world who are legally responsible for the management and financial health of the non-profit corporation *O Vertigo danse inc.* Artistic organizations in Canada who receive substantial public monies are obliged to incorporate and form this entity.

Gosselin was the only member of his family to become interested in the contemporary arts and to audaciously accept new art forms. Even in his youth he began making art and organizing cultural events. When still in college, he voraciously attended theatrical productions, music concerts, cinema clubs, *boîtes à chanson*, and more. Despite studies in art history at the *Université de Montréal*, his interest remained that of doing cultural "intervention", as he explained it, the mounting real-life contemporary arts events (in the sense of public displays) rather than in simply theorizing about past art histories.

He practiced several different art world métiers before founding his own company *Centre international d'art contemporain* (CIAC) in 1983, dedicated to promoting contemporary visual art forms through large-scale events. Art critic for the French-language newspaper *Le Devoir* in Québec from 1972-1974, he founded the first performance art office at the Canada Council for the Arts where he worked as a funding agent from 1975-9. His next position was that of curator at the Montréal Museum of Contemporary Art from 1979-83, until in 1983 he launched his own company with a first major exhibition event

called *Les 100 Jours d'arts contemporains*. He was drawn into the dance world by dance colleagues, together members of an interdisciplinary circle of artists who had participated in the social and artistic revolution in Québec called *Le Refus Global*. It was choreographer Jeanne Renaud, a founding mother in the '40s of Québec modernist dance, who convinced him to involve himself in the founding of what was to become *O Vertigo*.

He calls himself an arts *animateur*, a French term without precise English-language equivalent, but suggesting someone who is an organizer and facilitator of events. He articulated his role as an artistic member on the Board of Directors of *O Vertigo* in this manner:

[...] my function is to assure that Ginette is artistically defended. Because on a board of directors there can be a tendency, at times, to move towards the business end in order to make the company profitable – cutting three weeks of salary and [so] putting the dancers on unemployment, or doing less choreography. As for myself, I have always been the one who defends the point of view of Ginette, and so to avoid the company losing its image. <sup>xx</sup> (I-CG)

And so, as well as directing his own arts organization and mounting large-scale events in the visual arts world, for over 20 years Gosselin has discreetly supported the legal and financial stability of *O Vertigo* as a founding (and continuing) member of its board of directors.

### 5.3.3 *Théâtre du Saguenay's dance animatrice*

It was at the age of 20 that Lise Clément began to frequent the universe of artists, where she met her painter husband. She was born and raised in Montréal into a family, which "Of course!" as she exclaimed as if it were



common knowledge, had misgivings about an artistic vocation for their daughter. Working with artists was perhaps too fragile and not a very serious career choice, they thought. She later took a course in film script writing at the *Sorbonne* in Paris, but later discovered that her real *métier* was writing. At the time of our interview, she had been "steeping herself in the arts" for over 25 years. Clément and her husband moved back to Chicoutimi, where he taught art at the local university and she became a free-lance communications consultant about 14 years ago. Her work in this field had proved to be quite vast and varied, from writing and producing a local history project with sculptors to organizing an art film festival.

She had only recently discovered dance on film, while a member of a programming committee for the art film festival, and with dance it was "love at first sight, a real discovery." When Marie Talbot, director of the *Théâtre du Saguenay*, called her less than a year ago to offer a contract as dance *animatrice*, requiring work in audience development and educational outreach for the season's dance series, she had the time and inclination to accept<sup>5</sup>. Clément understood her task for the *Luna* presentation in Chicoutimi as one of "getting people to come out," as she put it, through communications and media strategies. From previous involvement with arts producing in the region, she had come to think of the Chicoutimi population in general as insular, inclined to make up their own minds, but also culturally-minded. Because she felt that there was a general attitude by many local people that dance simply didn't interest them, she decided that her role was to change this perception. She also expressed to me her belief that the key to getting people out to see dance for the first time was to arouse a spirit of discovery.

It was while sitting in on a film showing about the work of popular, Montréal dancer Margie Gillis that she found her publicity campaign idea for

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<sup>5</sup> Funding for dance presenters in Québec cities and towns outside of Montréal to employ "dance *animateurs*," in essence audience development agents, is part of a long-term project initiated by Montréal dance companies and now an independent non-profit organization called *La danse sur les routes*.

the dance series, and found the slogan "*La danse, c'est du bonbon*" (in English the equivalent of something like "Dance is a sweet treat"). And so during the year previous to the *Luna* performance in Chicoutimi she sent out candies, wrapped inside "beautiful" little gift packages containing publicity messages for the *Luna* presentation at their center. She also phoned teachers to distribute the candies to students, spoke about dance in radio interviews, launched ticket give-aways, and organized workshops for the *O Vertigo* dancers in a local dance school. The candy strategy, she affirmed, was a big hit (*a fait fureur* in the original French) as she put it, according to the feedback she had received. And in fact, the performance of *Luna* was nearly sold out, attended by the largest audience yet for contemporary dance at the *Théâtre du Saguenay*.

She confessed to me in our interview that she "[...] was not at all specialized in dance. I was new to dance, " <sup>xxi</sup> and so was obliged to learn about *Luna* and contemporary dance at the same time as her audiences. She claimed that her dance education was much enhanced by her consequent experiences, reading materials about dance and *O Vertigo*, accompanying dancers Ken Gould and Anne Barry to workshops, and listening to their ideas during a radio interview and personal discussions. And because the director of the *Théâtre du Saguenay*, Marie Talbot in the end didn't consent to according me an interview for my research project because she was "too busy," Clément was given the task of negotiating my entry as gatekeeper to the field of the Chicoutimi performance of *Luna*.

#### 5.3.4 Technical director and stage crew members

"I am just a guy who comes from the suburbs, with all the meaning that carries, the suburbs. [I'm] someone who was apolitical, without culture ...zero! <sup>xxii</sup> " (I-JP). Suburban-raised Jocelyn Proulx, technical director for *O Vertigo* during the *Luna* project, didn't find the ambition to be "anything in

particular" until the age of 20. After being refused for police training and trying computer science, he "had a flash" one day as he read the program offerings at the local CEGEP. When his eye fell upon the category of "Theater/production" he thought of his friends studying at the *Ste-Thérèse* theater school, and without so much as a single experience of a live theater performance he realized quite spontaneously "That's what I want to do, that's what I want to try!"<sup>xxiii</sup> He remembered feeling struck strongly by the idea, and that it had happened quite intuitively, or "automatically" as he put it. He realized that theater production work brought together so many things that he had done in his life, like the manual skills developed while doing farm labor. This was the end of his adolescence, as he said, and he was just beginning his intellectual development.

He consequently raced through the end of his school courses and then enrolled in the three-year program in theater techniques at the *Collège Lionel-Groulx* in *Ste-Thérèse*, graduating in 1983. Twelve years of professional work in various Montréal theater companies followed suit. He was initially hired as production manager in charge of all aspects of producing the technical end of performances, and acquired a taste for the job. But his heart was also set on stage lighting, and so he carried on a parallel free-lance career in this field as well as managing the *Théâtre Opsi* group of which he was co-founder. This was a period of working 60 to 70 hour weeks. One day he was called on by a "head-hunter" (employment recruiter) who offered him the job as technical director of *O Vertigo*. At the time of our interview, he had been worked with the company for 6 1/2 years.

He found the transition from theater to dance a difficult one because they seemed to be "two different worlds." At *O Vertigo*, he had only one director (Ginette Laurin) to account to for everything, and had to learn what he needed to do on his own without someone to guide him. Not only did he have "everything to learn about dance, but as well he had to learn how to

look at dance [and] on what to base the changing of stage effects, how to deal with that as a technician." xxiv

Proulx's work at *O Vertigo*, as I observed it, proved to be much more than the technical set-up and running of performances. He also had to negotiate closely with *Luna* artistic collaborators to modify their technical needs and desires according to production and budget limits given to him, another example of how the network of cooperation functioned in the *Luna* event. And as he put it, every decision he made had to meet the approval of the ultimate authority at *O Vertigo*: choreographer Ginette Laurin.

I also had occasion to dialogue with three *O Vertigo* stage crew members and to observe and chat a little with the technical crew working full-time at the *Théâtre du Saguenay* in Chicoutimi. *O Vertigo* technician Alain Ouellette was hired to assist Proulx in technical tasks when the company performed. He offered me his dance story one quiet day at the *O Vertigo* studios. Ouellette had set out originally to be a dancer and earned his B.A. in dance at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*, but now finds himself fortunate to have found this job that keeps him connected to the dance world he loves. As a technician, he sees his work as being there to simply "do as he is told" and not as involved in the creative side of the work. But he loves the chance to travel, and the excitement of being part of a live moment performance. (FN: 12-15-00) *O Vertigo*'s costume mistress Danielle Lecourtois is an old friend of mine, and was a promising young choreographer a decade ago. Like Ouellette, she had redirected her former career as a dancer-creator and now travels with the *O Vertigo* company on tour where her task in the *Luna* dance event was to clean, repair and otherwise take care of the dancers' costumes – sometimes even making emergency repairs during the performance. I also caught her on one occasion in the dressing rooms exercising her skills as performer by entertaining the dancers at their make-up tables by putting on comical wigs, perhaps her informal company role. *Monument-National* technician Yvan Thibault took a few moments of his time

to provide insight for me into the workings of the technical crew at the Montréal venue. From his point of view, the recently renovated *Monument* (the local nickname for the *Monument-National*) is one of the most beautiful theater halls in Montréal. And he also considers it a particularly pleasant working environment in comparison with his past experiences working at the downtown opera house *Place des Arts*. At the *Monument* everyone helps each other out, he explained, and so unionization hadn't been necessary. The technicians there had come together and asked for their own contract conditions, and the management agreed to them. There were three house technicians forming this crew: a chief machinist, a chief electrician and a chief sound person. *O Vertigo's* technical crew members Ouelette and Proulx worked in tandem with them to set up and to run the performance. (FN: 9-22-01) In stark contrast to the *Monument-National*, the *Théâtre du Saguenay* had a full technical crew of 12 union stage crew workers. There were so many in fact for the occasion that I came upon some with apparently nothing to do as *Luna* was setting up, and so they were just sitting around and playing on the computer or chatting. All the while as I watched, the *O Vertigo* crew moved as quickly as possible to ready technical systems for that evening's performance in the space of one day (FN: 12-4-01).

#### 5.4 *O Vertigo* dance workshop students

Every spring or summer in Montréal the *O Vertigo* dance company offers a workshop, taught by Laurin and the company dancers to a group of international students. Workshop students were selected by audition and came from across Canada, the United States, Mexico and parts of Europe – places where *O Vertigo* had been touring and so became known to local dancers.



A focus group was spontaneously convened for purposes of this study on August 11, 2001 with a group of 10 out-of-town students attending the 2001 edition of the *O Vertigo* summer dance workshop (brochure in Appendix P). This discussion gave me the opportunity to provide an international perspective on the métier of contemporary dancer, as well as the nature and role of dance workshop students in the socio-economic life of the *O Vertigo* dance company.

The workshop consisted in three weeks of intensive contemporary dance training, much of which put the new choreography of *Luna* into pedagogical use. According to executive director Lagacé, it also provided additional work for those company dancers who enjoyed teaching, and preferred to stay with the company for a longer period of time each year, and a way of financing the on-going operations of the company (FN: 8-8-01). The workshop also provided a pool of potential new talent for the company, as evidenced by company dancer Riede and company apprentice Isabelle Greaves entry into the company by way of participation in a the summer workshop.

Certain group characteristics of the 10 focus group students, gathered from the survey forms (Appendix E) are discussed briefly below and summarized in Tables 5.4.1 and 5.4.2:

(a) Age. Student focus group members were 20 to 39 years old, with seven in their twenties and three in their thirties. None were forty or over, mirroring the youth-dominated and relatively narrow career span of professional contemporary dancers in Montréal previously discussed.

(b) Gender. Eight out of 10 dance students were women. The small number of men in the student focus group actually did reflects the extremely small number of men in the workshop, as is true in Montréal contemporary dance training programs as well. Despite the small number of male dancers in training, most large and professional dance companies employ an equal number of dancers of both sexes, as was the case with *O Vertigo*.



(c) Profession. On their survey sheets during the focus group, nine of the 10 students cited dance world occupations as their vocation. They called their work alternately: dancer, dance teacher, choreographer, dance student, designer. (A tenth dance student entered a question mark at this place on the survey form.) It is interesting to note that on the line reserved for vocation, none of the dance workshop students wrote in the daily jobs that most young dancers are obliged to do for basic financial support (commonly jobs like waitress, massage therapist and art class model). This is likely indicative of the distinction they were making between the vocation of professional artist and the various supplementary jobs they do strictly for economic survival.

(d) Income. Seven out of 10 dance students (both young and mature dance professionals) claimed incomes that hovered at and below poverty level, which didn't even cover the basic cost of living. Of these seven, one lived at home with no income at all, and the other six claimed an income of the 0 - 15, 000\$ a year bracket. These out-of-town workshop participants were in an even lower income bracket than their Québécois dancer counterparts.

(e) Education. The student focus group members by-and-large were university-educated, as were the *O Vertigo* dancers. Two had completed professional training in dance academies and studios, four had university degrees in theater or dance, two came from university trainings outside of dance. Only one student claimed only a high school diploma and no other formal arts training.

(f) Place of residence, whether urban, suburban or rural. I asked focus group students where they were currently residing and dancing. Five of the 10 lived in or near the large urban centers of New York City and Mexico City. One claimed to be in transit, three from smaller cities and two from a dance company in Mazatlan, Mexico. All perceived their municipal environments as urban, and so none claimed to reside in rural or suburban settings.

(g) Ethnicity/cultural identity. Focus group members included four nationalities: two Americans, one Canadian, one German, and five Mexicans. The prominence of Mexican dancers in the workshop in 2001, I know from insider knowledge, is likely the result of the cultural exchange projects being carried out between *O Vertigo* dance and a prominent Mexican dance company, as well as the company's recent touring across Mexico. The answers penned by the dance students on their survey sheets moved beyond national borders when asked about ethnic/cultural identity. They variously identify themselves with a continental region ("East African"), a national region ("North Mexico"), a humanistic longing ("universal"), as of mixed identity ("mongrel", "with diversity", and "eclectic"), and even with pejorative stereotypes ("white" and "WASP"). One student even wrote in the poignant response "[I'm] German and I'm lost" perhaps in testimony to a kind of cultural confusion that exists in the midst of a moment of great global mobility and mixing of cultures and identities.

Interest in attending the workshop was generated by word-of-mouth among dancers, as the focus group disclosed (FG4). Three specific incentives emerged from the focus group conversation and also through informal conversations with the students (FN: 8-8-01): (a) they had felt inspired by the company's aesthetic after attending a performance in their city; (b) they were looking for an intensive training session in the summertime and this workshop was convenient; or (c) they came because of Montréal's reputation as a dance mecca and lively cultural city center.

In the course of the focus group conversation, some of the workshop students spoke about what drew them into the professional dance world in the first place. The Americans explained: Sarah Poole had idolized her older sister by following her into a first ballet class which she immediately adored; while Andrea Lieske's mother enrolled her in a creative dance class to canalize her "wild dancing" on the handball court. Among the Mexican dancers: Ruby Tagle was heading into engineering when she discovered her

natural talent for dance at an audition for the university dance group; Bernardo Rubenstein was a child gymnast who grew too tall for the sport but was instead invited to dance in high school; and athletic Jacob Morales Montaño "wanted to learn to dance [and wanted to know] the feeling of being [onstage] in the theater." As with the *O Vertigo* dancers, an evident physicality and love for the body's expressivity, that was already manifest in childhood, appeared to be one of the motifs underlying the career choice of professional dancer. (FG4)

### 5.5 "Expressive specialists"

Who were those participants who created and maintained a credible definition and evaluation of what was going on in the *Luna* event? Musicologist Ronström (1988) called them the "expressive specialists" whose expertise was useful in defining dance event decorum and criteria. With a perhaps a touch of irony, he defined these event participants as the key persons whose role it is to provide "the special knowledge which is needed [to] define what we are supposed to do [...] and how to do it properly" (1988, p 26). In terms of the *Luna* event, I have included those expressive specialists who wrote and published interpretive texts about the dance event in their capacity of journalist, critic or researcher<sup>6</sup>. But I have also placed here, because of their arts expertise and decisive power in establishing artistic criteria, those who judged the *Luna* project proposal and those who presented the performances to the public: funding agents and the peer juries they defer to, and the professional dance presenters who directed the theater venues.

These *Luna* expressive specialists included below served a dual function in this research project. Some provided me with theoretical

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<sup>6</sup> All of these expressive specialists had seen the *Luna* performance by the time of our interviews but for Tembeck, because her terminal illness prevented a second post-*Luna* interview.

grounding for this research project as was seen in the literature review, but together they form a distinct category of non-dancing but dance professional participants in the *Luna* event.

As I will discuss below, these specialist participants contributed various kinds of ideas about the *Luna* event. Their ideological frameworks assisted dancegoers, the art world-at-large and myself as researcher in apprehending, understanding and evaluating the dance event. As was true for all dance event participants, the expressive specialists also drew from a matrix of ideas and beliefs about art and artists, as well as their own experiences, in forging their ideas. Their interpretations and evaluations were disseminated orally and in written form in public media such as newspapers, radio programs, research reports, catalogues and programs for audiences, government policy papers and books. Among them are also teacher-scholars, notably Tembeck, who carried their points of view into university classrooms and academic conferences.

Although an expert cultural *animateur*, with studies in art history and considerable expertise in arts practices, *O Vertigo* board member Gosselin was not included among the expressive specialists. In fact, he critiqued this specialist function with scepticism, finding that judgments of these experts were too influential and too predominant in the art world. In his own words:

[...] I don't develop an enormous amount of theory about the work of artists. I am satisfied with simply presenting the work.  
 [...] Because there is the didactic of the strong statement, [which is to say that] when people see an idea developed in a text, it becomes for them a better work. I have difficulty with that  
 [...]''<sup>xxv</sup> (I-CG)

### 5.5.1 Six dance presenters

The dance presenters (my word for the vocation) described their dance world function and role in diverse ways. They called themselves variously producers, programming directors, department heads, associate directors, artistic directors, booking agents, and more. All were responsible for becoming familiar with the work of contemporary dance companies from around the world and for making programming choices at the theaters where they work. But each one also undertakes many auxiliary responsibilities and tasks according to the nature of their institution and the position they hold in the organization. Some of the dance presenters were hired to direct already-existing venues (*Lucerner Theater*, *Théâtre du Saguenay*, *Maison de la Culture Mercier*, *The Joyce Theater*), while others built and founded the organizations for which they worked (*Joint Adventures*, *Tanzhaus NRW*, the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*). All of them but the Montréal festival presented dance seasons throughout the year, within a local theater building. And only the Montréal festival, and Joint Adventures on occasion, had no permanent residence but rented and produced large-scale events during short periods and in several venues around town.

As well as booking performances, some of the European presenters had budgets ample enough to invest financially as "co-producers" of the new creation, offering money and/or residency rehearsal support to dance companies before the premiere. As part of his work, *O Vertigo's* executive director Lagacé traveled to "rally new [co-production] partners for the next creation" and to "get them [...] to come to Montréal" to experience the company and new work-in-progress in person (I-BL). I attended the CINARS arts marketplace event in December 2000 in Montréal where a large group of dance presenters from Europe, Canada and the U.S. was able to see excerpts from *Luna* before it had been shown to the public. I spent time at the *O Vertigo* CINARS booth with Lagacé and also Menno Plukker (photo 17), the



company touring agent as they worked on booking proposals. Some of the presenters who attended the *Luna* showcase (a special private showing in their behalf) were long-time supporters of the company, and others were experiencing Laurin's choreography for the first time. I observed their mixed reactions to the *Luna* excerpts, and noted that as a whole the producers watched attentively, or as dancer Riede put it afterwards, "respectfully." As the dancing progressed, some of the watchers literally sank lower in their seats and fidgeted, but their attention stayed nevertheless focused on the dancing. But it seemed as if they were not all equally absorbed, nor watching with the same intensity and viewpoint. This was later nuanced in five informal conversations, in which some of them confided to me that they felt *O Vertigo's* work was some of the most compelling and successful dance around, while others were not yet sure what to make of it. (FN: 12-1-00)

The profiles of presenters below were pulled together from interviews with four of *Luna's* presenters: Boucher, Wexler, Schwartz and Heun. Two other presenters – Beaulieu and Garneau -- were only able to give me a few minutes of their time in conversation, to which I added a few contributions about them from fieldnotes and my insider knowledge of their work. Included in these portraits are socio-economic characteristics (Table 5.3), details from the story of what drew them into the dance world, and how they recounted coming to choose the vocation of dance presenter.

*Profile #1: Sylvain Garneau, agent culturel pour la Maison de la Culture Mercier in Montréal.* Garneau cancelled our scheduled interview and soon after left his position at the *Maison de la Culture*, leaving me only able to report on a few aspects of his work from our brief encounter in his office on March 3, 2001. Garneau was one of a network of "Cultural Agents," a city employee appointed by a municipal body to run and operate one of the city-funded *Maisons de la Culture* of which there were 11 in the city of Montréal. This network was created in the '80s as part of a new municipal social policy that



recommended more access<sup>7</sup> to the arts for more of the city's citizens. A *Maison de la Culture* complex was set up in the various neighborhoods, each with a lending library, a theater space and art gallery at its disposal – sometimes all in the same building, other times scattered around the area. And most important of all, in terms of the mandate to “democratize the arts” the tickets to performances (and entry to most all of the public services) were nearly always free of charge.

As I have learned from repeated joint projects together, the *Maison de la Culture Mercier* is in a southeast neighborhood that is relatively poor and dominated by retired persons. Although housing a well-equipped theater with a stage and seating area, considered ideal by local artists for mid-sized dance performances, I was told by their staff that little contemporary dance is performed there because the neighborhood population prefers more traditional art forms.

And so what Garneau was able to explain, in our short encounter, was that he tries to support contemporary dance in another way by lending the stage to technical residencies. It was on his stage that *O Vertigo* dance was first able to develop their lighting, sound and visual imagery in a theatrical setting outside of their studios (during the week of January 4-10, 2001), and later on the theater space at the *Maison de la Culture Mercier* was again given to *O Vertigo* for the project of filming *Luna*.

*Profile #2: Louise Beaulieu, general manager of the Théâtre du Saguenay in Chicoutimi, Québec.* Beaulieu was a former ballet teacher who had become the general manager and booking agent (as communications consultant Clément called her) in charge of choosing the programming for the Auditorium Dufour in Chicoutimi, Québec. Clément informed me that Beaulieu was very involved with the local dance community, works closely with her colleague

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<sup>7</sup> In practice accessibility was accomplished by establishing the culture houses throughout the island, and by offering free entry to neighborhood residents.

Marie Talbot, the communications director, in making programming choices, and also had management responsibilities.

Beaulieu proved difficult to contact, impossible to sit down for an interview. In our sole phone conversation, she referred me to Clément "for my needs" and indicated that she would likely be too busy to give me any more time. We did manage to have a spontaneous 5-minute chat backstage at her theater on the evening of *O Vertigo's* performance in Chicoutimi. She told me that she had known the dance company for many years and had "bought the *Luna* performance on speculation," meaning that she booked *Luna* before it was even created. And then, as we spoke, she unexpectedly cancelled part of our former agreement about giving me access to her audience, by telling me that she had decided that morning not to allow me to record the post-performance audience talk, which she herself would be directing. She said it was because she feared making the audience nervous by the presence of sound recording equipment. "[The tape recorder] might make them flee. There is a risk of inciting them to leave." <sup>xxvi</sup> (FN: 11-3-01 and 11-4-01)

*Profile #3 : Martin Wexler, programming director of The Joyce Theater in New York City.* Our interview took place in his office at the Joyce Theatre in NYC, a few weeks after the *Luna* performance at this venue.

Wexler grew up in Syracuse, upstate New York, to a "typical middle class" family who were supportive of the arts. He was given piano lessons in his youth, and began performing jazz-and-tap choreography in high school musicals. After trying modern dance in college, he liked it well enough to add dance as a double major to that of economics, doing interdisciplinary "independent projects based on the economics of the performing arts." But he was not secure in his artistic talent, and in the force of his drive and determination to have a career as a dancer. So he chose to "stay in the dance world, but hopefully work in a field or an area where jobs were a little more secure, and more long lasting." He began his career as an administrative

assistant at The Joyce Theater, and "grew from there into" his position as the director of programming.

He described his role and tasks at "the Joyce" quite clearly and succinctly. In his own words, he is responsible for selecting the companies that will perform there, whether as self-producing rentals or as Joyce productions. He reviews applications, travels around to see performances live, and selects the companies he feels are most appropriate for the Joyce season. It is Wexler who interprets the historical mandate of the Joyce Theater to present a wide range of middle-sized dance companies to the public.

*Profile #4 : Diane Boucher, associate director and programmer of the Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal.* Montréal born and bred, Boucher was raised by a father with only a sixth-grade education who worked on trains for Canadian Pacific. Her family was "very, very middle class" she explained, and not "cultivated" in the artistic sense. There were no books or records in their home. Her parents would have preferred her to become a bilingual secretary, and she doesn't know what generated her interest in the arts. But she did remember how she came to work in the arts field.

Her artistic immersion began at university when the time came to choose a major. She hesitated between anthropology, art history and religion, because fascinated by the study of human beings as they engaged with "the sacred." She finally chose anthropology, but it was anthropology of art, as a meeting place for her combined interests. Never wanting to be an artist herself, she had a passion for being close to artists because "[...] for me, the sacred is very, very much present in artists, and they are perhaps those who come closest to the sacred on a daily basis through their work " <sup>xxvii</sup>. She began mounting visual arts exhibitions while still studying museology, and just by chance found herself after graduation working in a museum and eventually presenting performances there.

In the early '80s, Boucher, Chantale Pontbriand and myself began to develop the idea of an international dance festival in Montréal, which we eventually co-founded in 1985. We worked together as a programming committee, as members of the festival's board of directors, and each of us took charge of a certain area of work for the biannual event. (My own role as special projects manager was to develop community outreach activities such as classes, audience talks and school shows.)

Boucher was named Vice-President and Associate Director, but prefers to compare her work with that of museum curators who work closely with artists to develop exhibitions. When I asked her to describe the work she does, she answered simply that she "takes care of a festival." Her duties also involved grant-writing, fundraising, programming consultation, establishing contacts with all manner of people involved in the festival, and even some work in publicity (where she produced 60-second television "spots"). As she explained, all of these activities gravitated around the core mission of the festival, which was from her point of view "to give full value to artists' work." <sup>xxviii</sup>

Boucher articulated the mission of the festival and her role and work in this way:

[...the festival is] a link between the public and art, and the choreographer. And so we do everything we can so that the public comes to understand what the artist is trying to say. [...] It means choosing [artists] who have something to say and say it in an interesting, articulate way and finding the best way to transmit what they want to say to the public in general, to the wider public, to everyone. In order to do this, we use all possible means whether texts, films, presentations, workshops, all kinds of things [...]. <sup>xxix</sup> (I-DB)

In 2003, both Boucher and I left the festival. Boucher is currently reorienting her career as an independent dance development agent, working on international exchange projects with her extensive network of dance presenter colleagues.

*Profile #5. Stefan Schwarz, head of the stage department at Tanzhaus NRW in Düsseldorf, Germany.* The interview took place in the noisy café of the Raffinerie arts center in Brussels during a dance showcase event we were both attending.

The first signs of Schwarz's future vocation in the dance world were his childhood love for athleticism. He showed a marked interest, as he put it, in basketball, jumping and running. He also mused that his inclination towards the arts may have also been a form of rebellion against his technically-minded engineer father, and the comfort of his middle class environment. He noted his mother's interest in the visual arts as a stimulant. And then in Düsseldorf in the '80s, when he was 16 years old, a former girlfriend took him by chance to a dance class. After this initiation he "[...] invested more and more time, [actually] dancing myself, [performing in] stage productions, watching a lot of things." He danced in small companies, and enrolled in the "cultural studies" of theater, music and dance. Schwartz described this unique university program in Hildesheim, called *Kultur Pedagogik* (Pedagogy of Culture), as a study of the "'transfer of culture' to any sort of audience in the more pedagogical sense, but also in the transfer of arts through stage or through radio, through television."

He began practicing and teaching Contact Improvisation, and eventually wrote a master's thesis about the dance form in the framework of postmodern dance. When he was 28, he began "moving around to see things [...] and then started organizing things." Seven years ago he became head of the stage department at Tanzhaus NRW in Düsseldorf, a new nation-wide network founded in Germany to foster dance, and since their move to a new

building a couple of years ago his work "has become a much bigger thing with much more intensity and a broader view internationally." He called himself a programmer, but in his role as dance organizer his interest was shifting from putting on performances to becoming more involved in the production aspect of choreography. He explained production as the "process of developing pieces and supporting artists in this process to see how they can realize their idea." He supported these artistic production residencies with rehearsal space, promotion, contacts and even helped artists sell their work to other presenters.

*Profile #6: Walter Heun, dance producer for the Lucerntanz series in Switzerland and the Joint Adventures production company in Munich.* I had the chance to observe Heun interacting with Laurin, and conversed with him in a café, on his visit to the O Vertigo studios on October 11, 2000. Since he had no time for an in-depth interview at that time, a year-and-a-half later I posed four questions to him in an email exchange on May 3 and 5, 2002.

Walter Heun flew to Montréal from Munich expressly to preview the creation of *Luna*. He was sitting and conversing with Laurin, on October 11, 2001, as they watched the company rehearsing several sections of the work-in-progress for his benefit. As they talked out loud I overheard Laurin providing insights to aspects of the work, and particularly as to how it would be developing in terms of the eventual use of optical lenses, certain kinds of costumes and technological imagery. At one point Heun he whispered to me his view of Laurin's working process: "I'm always amazed how Ginette has a very clear idea early on about what she will be using, and is so efficient in her rehearsals."

Walter sent me the story of his dance background in a succinct email correspondence. In it he cited three crucial "moments of initiation" that had contributed to his interest and entry into the professional dance milieu:



- (a) He liked watching the girls as they were doing jazz gymnastic classes in the sports department, at first only for the pleasure of watching them dancing. With a touch of wry humor he continued that, "after exams we had a final party with theatrical performances for which I convinced 9 other male 'dancers' and a female choreographer to produce two dance pieces on 'how the girls do it.' " It was his first dance producing work!
- (b) He was an aficionado of late '70s and early '80s dance films like *Hair*, *Flash Dance* and *Fame*. From watching these films he felt "this strong impulse to express my emotions through movement."
- (c) He took some seminars to "intensify his interest" in dance at the university where he was studying theater.

To his mind, entry into the work of dance producing began at the moment when his political consciousness about the arts was raised: "[I] pulled out a piece of paper and a pen [...] in the right bar at the right moment [...] to note the complaints of the dancers and choreographers about the funding situation in Munich in 1984." The term dance producer is not a comprehensive fit, he wrote, to explain the many roles he plays in the production of dance these days: festival director, manager of a dance company, a cultural funding body, a dance politician, and an artistic director (of his own production company) (I-WH).

It was Heun who offered *O Vertigo* a two-week residency just before the première of *Luna* that he consequently presented in the Lucerne opera house in January 2001. For this residency Heun provided support space and staff to facilitate the final stage of costume construction and other technical aspects of *Luna* in an effort to "open the Lucern opera house to the co-producing dynamic happening in Europe" (FN: 10-11-00).

### 5.5.2 Dance funding agents

Two "dance agents" from Canadian federal and provincial government arts funding offices were encountered in the course of fieldwork. Monique Léger visited the *O Vertigo* studios one afternoon, and I later obtained an in-depth interview with Line Lanthier. Both of are dance colleagues I have known for over 20 years, at first in their past role as young choreographers when they came to danced their own choreographies at *Tangente*. They had now each become full-time professional government employees at arts councils, laboring to improve financial aid to the dance world and create the policies that help dispense available funding judiciously.

Their role in the *Luna* dance event was principally as proponents in the process of financing the company's operations and choreographic projects. More specifically, their role was to participate in formulating cultural policies, advising their artistic clients and supervision of the jurying processes. Their funding programs also offered general support to project for career development for the *O Vertigo* dancers. Because the mandate of the so-called arms'-length "arts councils" (in contrast to the more politicized model of "cultural ministries" and "heritage portfolios"), for which they worked, was to provide funding to artists informed by their own insider knowledge and which responded to the real needs and practices of dance artists. The staff of these arts councils is usually composed of artworld experts with professional artistic experience as was true for Léger and Lanthier.

At these arts councils in the Canadian and Québécois contexts, it is juries of "artistic peers" who make the decisions about which projects will receive grants and bursaries to help pay for sustaining or project costs for their artistic creations. Lanthier offered me a critical essay by arts administrator Sygoda (1996) about the peer jurying process in the United States, which had been a key influence on her understanding of the corollary

phenomenon in Canada. In this text Sygoda distinguished between juries of different sizes, criteria, types of applications, and degrees of openness to the public, but opined that "the power to select and convene a panel is where the true power lies" (in other words, with the funding agents) because "the real guidelines are in the hearts and minds of the panelists" (p. 55). At this time, including the period of *Luna's* grant applications, jury composition at the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec* and the Canada Council for the Arts includes a varied sampling of peers who are fellow artists, arts administrators and arts presenters.

Francophone Monique Léger spent much of her dance career as a performer and choreographer working in Vancouver on the west coast of Canada before leaving to work in Canada's capital city of Ottawa. She was one of several dance agents working for the Dance Office of the Canada Council for the Arts. Léger and I have often spoken together about cultural policy in dance, and I have participated on a consulting committee in her presence. Léger paid a personal visit to the company on October 13, 2000. She spent most of the afternoon in Lagacé's office in a meeting with him behind a closed door. She emerged from the meeting during a first rehearsal break to speak with the company dancers about how they might apply for grants to advance their career and skills. At a later break in rehearsals, Laurin joined Léger and Lagacé for about 10 minutes, but otherwise left most of the fundraising meetings and work to Lagacé. (FN: 10-13-00)

Lanthier is a Québécoise who grew up near a small town north of Montréal, *St-Antoine des Laurentides*. A country girl from a poor family, she was raised on a farm with no exposure at all to dance, but with parents ready to support her in anything she chose to do. She traces her desire to dance back to the second grade in elementary school, when she experienced a one-time only expressive movement exercise during physical education class. One day, sitting there in her blue shorts in the gymnasium, the teacher asked students to move like a flower that was opening. It was a seminal moment

that remained in her mind for many years. In high school she continued to nourish her interest in expressive movement with after-school gymnastics practice and a Modern Dance class. At university she danced as recreation while earning a degree in psychology. By that time she knew that she wanted to consecrate her life to dancing. She spent a couple of years in university dance programs, but had reached the end of training resources in universities at that time, and so declared herself a dance professional. She soon became a member of choreographer Karen Jamieson's fledgling dance company Terminal City Dance in Vancouver. Although she tried her hand at choreography for a short while, Lanthier found herself gradually assuming administrative duties for Jamieson's company, and then became an apprentice in tour and festival organization. After ten years of living in Vancouver, Lanthier moved back east again and worked for the *Montréal Danse* company and the *Conseil des Arts du Canada* before taking her current job as a "dance officer" for the *Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec* in her home province. (I-LL).

As a member of a peer jury chosen by Lanthier, and at another point an artistic "client" as *Tangente's* artistic director under her supervision, I experienced first hand the way in which she interacts with the artistic community in her role as dance agent. In the governmental structure for which she works, it is through different kinds of consultation (councils, committees, personal evaluations and juries) with the artistic community that definitions, criteria and evaluations are formulated for determining the kind and amount of public funds that artists will receive. In the course of our conversation, Lanthier elaborated on her engagement in arts policy debates and her role in choosing criteria, peer evaluators and jury members to judge artistic work

### 5.5.3 Dance writers and broadcasters

There was a group of expressive specialist *Luna* participants who were especially dance literate (knowledgeable) and who had chosen the vocation of producing written and oral discourse about dancers and dancing. Although they were rarely able to earn a living wage at this kind of work, unless as a university professor teaching and researching, they see themselves as professionals. Among those who wrote about *Luna*, I interviewed freelance writer Phillip Szporer, journalists Stéphanie Brody and Linde Howe-Beck, and late historian Iro Tembeck. In addition, the last part of this section includes a description of 38 dance texts about *Luna* published in newspapers, magazines and websites. Among the texts included here are also Barras's book-length story of Laurin's life in dance (Barras, 1995) and excerpts from the first history book on Montréal dance by Tembeck (1991).

#### 5.5.3.1 Métier of dance writing

In the first year of *Luna's* creation and touring, over thirty dance critics and journalists from Montréal, Canada, the U.S. and Europe published texts and/or spoke on public radio about *Luna*. Some of these specialists were observed in the field, past conversations with them over two decades were also brought to memory, and four were interviewed.

The four dance writers interviewed called their role in the dance world variously: scholar, historian, critic, writer, journalist, educator, and even pioneer. Two used Québécois expressions to name what they do: *chroniqueur de danse* and *animateur de danse*. All had some background in the professional dance world as dance students and performers and began dancing in childhood. As long-standing members of the Montréal dance community, each was able to carry a historical perspective into their texts. Each was

engaged in numerous projects and ventures in the dance world. They came to the Montréal dance world from diverse cultural backgrounds: Spzorer is Polish-Canadian, Linde Howe-Beck is English Canadian, Tembeck was born in Egypt but raised in a British environment, and Brody is a Québécoise whose father was of Jewish-Eastern descent. Some of the descriptive analysis in this section (and in the chapters on meaning), concerning the role of dance specialists who write and speak about dance, is guided by aesthetic philosopher Shusterman's essay (2002) on the logics of arts criticism and his three critical approaches: (a) descriptivism (those who describe); (b) prescriptivism (those who tell us how to interpret); and (c) performativism (those who take a creative role in making sense of the artwork) (pp. 36-43). All three critical perspectives appear in various combinations in the profiles developed below of the four dance writers.

These dance writers' lives in dance and dance writing were guided by a particular, individual ethos and beliefs about the value and meaning of the art form. Their profiles below delve into the backgrounds that fostered their dance views and how they articulated and went about enacting their roles in the dance event.

#### 5.5.3.2 Four biographical profiles.

##### *Profile #1. Philip Szporer, freelance dance writer and broadcaster.*

Szporer is an Anglophone Canadian of Polish and Russian origin. At the time of this study, he had been watching professional dance for 20 years, writing about it for 18 years. While in his early twenties, he did some Modern Dance training and performing with the Sekai Dance Theatre in Montréal. In 1983, Szporer began to talk about dance on radio, what he called doing a spoken "dance column." At the time of our interview, he was writing on dance for the weekly *Hour* newspaper, and was a radio commentator for



three radio broadcasting outlets. During the pilot project at Jacob's Pillow with *O Vertigo*, Szporer had been hired for the summer as a "scholar-in-residence." I observed him there organizing and carrying out audience talks with Laurin, one of which I used as data for this study (I-GL/PS). He has also been hired by Tangente and other venues as a "*dance animateur*" whose job, as he put it, has been to create links between the art work, audiences and the wider community. He has also embarked on other "dance ventures" that involve him in "various aspects of processes with different people," like creating a "dance diary" of a rehearsal process. He also frequently traveled abroad, advocating and advising dance communities and organizations about development projects. His writings have been published in magazines, and he has presented scholarly papers at dance conferences.

He generally called himself a freelance dance writer, and holds a performativist view of dance writers and critics "as an integral part of the art form" and even as a kind of historian. With over two decades as an insider to and interpreter of the contemporary dance milieu, Szporer claimed "I've been witness to a lot of [growth and development], and I know some of the participants. [...] Therefore my role is not simply to critique a movement per se, in other words a gesture [...] but I've seen the movement of the art form [across time]." He has born witness to "[...] how things have developed from studio performances to on-site location performances, to the building up of spaces, the migration of spaces, how audiences perceive dance because of those spaces, how the people who run certain organizations and festivals determine the menu sometimes. [...] and I know some of the participants or the players."

He also described his role in the wider community as giving a "window to activities going on" and awakening an interest for dance in the novice dance-goer. At the same time, he "speaks to" the dance lover who attends performances frequently. And a third readership and listener he has kept in mind is the dance professional who "reads his reviews in a very

particular way." He credits his liberal arts education for leading him to incorporate into his writing and radio talks historical, sociological and psychological elements which "[bring] in all the elements that make up a person." (I-PS)

*Profile #2. Linde Howe-Beck, professional journalist and dance writer.*

Now in her sixties, Howe-Beck is Montréal's elder dance writer. Howe-Beck began her career in the professional dance world at only 3 years old in ballet classes. Her ballet studies continued until 18, when she began working as a "television dancer" while still in university. It was "[...] June Taylor kind of stuff. Radio City Music Hall kind of stuff." Howe-Beck enthused, "I loved it. I loved musical theater. I did that sort of stuff. I did summer stock [theater]."

She became a newspaper journalist and editor. In 1974, while entertainment editor at the Montréal daily English-language newspaper *The Gazette*, she started writing about dance. It began as an experiment in which she wanted to experience the "horrific deadlines" of her arts critics, but at the same time she wanted to relieve the music critic of his dance duties because he had taken a clear dislike to the emerging postmodern dance on the Montréal scene. In a descriptivist frame of mind, Howe-Beck felt a "keen sense of responsibility" to fairly represent the dance community in her newspaper. When she first began writing about dance she felt "like a fish out of water" because having only a little dance history and performance experience in her background, but no training in arts criticism. She had to "find out very quickly why I didn't like things." She went looking for more exposure, even attending a 1977 dance critic's conference to meet in person the protagonists in her new field. It was important for Howe-Beck "to keep an open mind" about the new contemporary dance work. As a younger journalist and critic, her first priority was always to her readers and next to the dance community. But after almost 25 years watching and writing about

dance, she now wanted to "get her needs met as someone who is writing about dance," as she said, and so has begun to intervene in programming choices by advocating for artists she felt needed to be seen.

*Profile #3. Stéphanie Brody, chroniqueur de danse.*

Brody told this story about how she chose her artistic vocation: "I was small, and I was looking at *Le Devoir*, and I said to myself, 'This is what I want to do,' How the hell I was going to get there, I had no idea. Now I've figured it out. I don't know [why but] I just love the idea of explaining to people what artists do." Her passion for art interpretation was to take many forms.

Brody is a bilingual Montréalais who speaks French and English with equal ease. She was one of the few participants in this study who was born into an artistic, well-to-do family. Her parents sent her to a high school that emphasized art, history and general culture. She studied ballet throughout childhood until at 16 years old, as she explained, "my body kind of 'gave way' (she laughs) and my shape started to come in, and that was that!" She got "side-tracked" away from dance until working for the CISM radio program *Concordanse*. Over ten years of radio hosting, she has interviewed young choreographers and delved into "the process [of dance making] and how it is done." She began her professional career by working with François Colbert at the moment when he was creating a new arts administration program at the *Hautes Études Commerciales*. Moving on to become the first employee at the cultural consulting agency *Cultur'Inc.*, she found her mentor in company director François Arcand. Together they undertook "all kinds of [sociological] studies, market and otherwise" about the artworld in Canada (for instance, *Cultur'Inc.* and Decima Research, 1991). When Arcand finally changed careers, Brody continued on to work as an arts administrator at the *Jeunesses Musicales* organization. It was one day during a showcase performance of "*La Voisine*" by Dulcinée Langfelder that Brody experienced a

pivotal moment when the power of movement brought tears to her eyes. She also participated in an arts management program at the University of Waterloo including theory of funding and marketing, and an apprenticeship at the *Grands Ballets Canadiens*.

Now at 36, Brody worked as a dance journalist and critic (*chroniqueur de danse* is the term she prefers) at the French-language daily newspaper *La Presse*. She had been writing either previews or reviews for dance performances at the pace of twice a week for the last 10 years. Remaining interested, since her radio days, particularly in "[...] what's happening behind the scenes, how people get ideas [...]" and the notion of *éducation publique* (meaning public education but also refers to the concept of arts literacy), her interviews with artists always lasted a little over an hour. But space for her texts in *La Presse* is usually limited to 30-40 lines and she is required to avoid over-analyzing for this wide-ranging readership. She has found it difficult to develop much educational depth and discussion of process within these parameters. Brody described her writing process as very intuitive and, because she loves the act of writing, "there's something a little poetic" in her texts. When critiquing choreography, Brody has tried to be as objective as possible. But more the descriptivist, she doesn't believe it is her role to interpret the meaning of work for readers and audiences. She has seen herself "[...] more as a filter for the average dance spectator." (I-SB)

*Profile #4. Iro Tembeck, pioneering dance educator, historian and critic.*

Tembeck "has been involved in dance since the age of 5." Because she "used to jump up and down a lot" her parents sent her to dance class. Her mother was a painter, but otherwise she was surrounded by businessmen and lawyers. At a British primary school in Cairo, Egypt, where she was raised, she studied the Greek revival dancing of Isadora Duncan from age 5 to 7, which she called "barefeet dancing with hoops, scarves, and balls, to find the figure eights, etc." Her talent recognized by family and teachers, she was

then sent to the Sonia Ivanova Ballet Academy in Cairo. Since she "was not a short tutu type [but] a long tutu type", she often did character dancing and was "placed in solo situations." She later became an opera ballet dancer and did some "commercial" television dancing. (I-II)

She came from Cairo to Montréal in 1967 at the age of 20 with no money, to visit the World Exposition and her brother, and to discover "the New World." She experienced jazz and contemporary dance with enthusiasm, and soon left ballet behind. With a B.A. already gained, she continued her studies of English Literature at McGill University in a Master's program and earned a professional dance teacher's degree from the Canadian College of Dance (now called Ryerson). Tembeck began teaching "period dancing and fundamentals of movement" in dance studios and at the McGill Theatre Department. She auditioned for the *Nouvelle Aire* modern dance company where she danced and choreographed from 1972-77, and later founded the Axis dancers' collective. (I-II)

But as she explained, "(she sighs), I kept saying 'I'm at the university and I'm trying to make people move, and I'm in the studio...and I would like to make them think.' " This led her to pioneer the teaching of dance history in Québec, her first opportunity being with the *Académie des Grands Ballets Canadiens*. She characterized herself as a dance historian, critic and educator and was a full-time professor in the *Département de danse* at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*.

She spoke of her main role as that of social missionary and historian, actively intervening to create meaning, very much in the spirit of Shusterman's performativism. For Tembeck it was imperative to give "visibility to a theoretical subject that was not sufficiently made use of, which was the growth of dance in Québec." She saw Montréal dance as a very specific kind of dance culture, not to be "summarily put into either North America or Canada at large, or the Francophone countries." With a minor in history and her "Egyptian psyche" the "idea of roots" was vital to her. As



touched on in Chapter II, she felt strongly that in the New World, 'with modern buildings, modern things [...] we have forgotten ... the yesterday.' There is then an "aspect of preservation" in her texts, although paradoxically she also insists that her own perspectives and environment keep shifting and so does her writing. She expressed her understanding that the work of the historian as a matter of subjective interpretation (see also Tembeck, 1994c). In her own writings on choreography she interprets, analyzes and comes up with arguments about choreographies, while thinking always of the broader picture and of previous works. Expressing pride in having "pioneered many things," she did indeed pen the first book-length dance history about the development of professional dance in Montréal (Tembeck, 1991) and collected the first historical archives on the early period. She summarized her life's desire in our interview as "always [have] been wanting to make people or help people perceive dance as an integral part of society. To build bridges between the dance colony and the rest [of the community-at-large]." (I-IT)

#### 5.5.3.3 Additional dance journalists and reporters.

Although I had only met six of them in person, 20 journalists and critics are included in this study by way of (and because of) the texts they wrote about *Luna*. Some were vocational dance historians, others dance critics, reporters and/or researchers who had garnered special knowledge of the contemporary dance world through studies and life experiences. Each had honed a personal perspective about dance and dance discourse, including a set of criteria to evaluate and interpret choreography and public performances. A few were career journalists with only a general knowledge of the arts and of dance, simply announcing details and features of the coming performance of *Luna*.



Their writing was published in books, weekly and daily newspapers, magazines, and on websites. The texts varied in length from a single paragraph (e.g. brief announcements of the performance) to a couple of pages (in Tembeck's book for example, 1991). For the most part, the radio programs had been actually conceived by the radio hosts themselves, out of a personal interest in educating the public about contemporary dance. As witnessed in the above profiles, the duration of the radio shows gave considerably more room to develop in-depth interviews and ideas about dance than did the newspapers.

The forms of dance discourse developed by these specialists ranged from descriptive genres (announcements, descriptive analysis of performances), to informative educational approaches (including historical and social contexts), and critical evaluations of the choreography and the particular performance reviewed. The texts offered differing perspectives and each was tempered by their personal art views, how they perceived their artworld role, and the literary style of the writer.

A closer, more detailed look at the content of the previews and reviews of *Luna* yielded a wide range of aspects and subjects: descriptive accounts of the choreography, the dancers training and skills, the mise-en-scène and music, the size and reactions of audience, the local presentation context, contemporary dance aesthetics and history; evaluations of the dance's form and content and interpretations of *Luna's* meaning.

And finally, as witnessed by the 4 previous profiles, these texts were created with a specific "readership" in mind, and the writers were obliged to follow the parameters that formed the policy of the institutions producing and disseminating their work for a "target readership." As Szporer suggested in his profile above, it is possible to imagine 3 distinct kinds of readers: those who were novices to the dance world, those who already frequent performances regularly, and the professional artists themselves (I-PS).

## 5.6 *Luna* audiences

How did spectators behave during the *Luna* performances, and what kinds of conventions guided their spectating? How did they come to be interested in contemporary dance spectating? What kind of people were those came to see *Luna*?

In the course of my fieldwork I observed various kinds of spectators watching *Luna* and held three audience focus groups immediately after performances in the cities of Montréal and Chicoutimi. Twenty-two people in all participated in the groups, and they included first-time, occasional and frequent participants as well as five artworld professionals.

### 5.6.1 Audience behavior

Although seemingly axiomatic to those familiar with contemporary dance, it is worth remembering that the very definition of the performing arts in Western culture implies a presentational event (Nahachewsky, 1995) in which artists perform onstage for observing spectators. *Luna*'s visual designer Morgenthelar described the performing arts spectator in a commonsense way as "[...] somebody [who] goes from home or from work into a theatre, and pays money and sits down to see something [...] for whatever reason, desire, they go into a space and they sit down for you [the artist performing onstage]. They try to be quiet and concentrate. They don't talk [...]." (I-AM)

As well as the visible relationships between performers and spectators, this study looks at how audience members behaved among themselves both individually and collectively, and also the more subtle interactions among spectators and *Luna*'s technicians, company and venue personnel, and various expressive specialists. In other words, in their role as spectators,

*Luna*'s audience members not only paid for a ticket and watched the dancers perform, but they also perceived the visible effects of the technicians' work from backstage, interacted with box office personnel and ticket takers, some read newspapers previews and reviews, and some read program notes for the performance and studied the *Luna* poster prepared by *O Vertigo*'s directors and staff.

*Luna* spectators attending the performances at the *Monument-National* and the *Théâtre de Saguenay* shared and demonstrated collectively certain learned and agreed-upon behavioral codes, or theatrical frames (Goffman, 1974) for most contemporary dance spectating, as described in the previous chapter. For instance, they sat still and in the dark while intently watching the dancers performing onstage in front of them. They didn't applaud physical feats of dancers as is usual in classical ballet and ice-dancing for instance, holding their applause until the ending point of choreographies when performers bow to them. In practice, as I have observed through the years, breaks in these protocols or mistaken behavior due to inexperience are usually corrected by their immediate companions and/or family members, other fellow audience members and sometimes even theatre personnel. And although the *O Vertigo* dance company is self-defined in their promotional materials as contemporary and innovative, choreographer Laurin had not been among the genre of non-conventional artists who seeks to alter or challenge theatrical conventions of dance-going concurrent with the *Luna* performances.

### 5.6.2 Initiation into the dance world

What was the nature of *Luna* spectators' first contacts with the professional dance world? While the focus group format did not leave enough time for members to recount an elaborate story about how they came

to attend *Luna*, they were asked how their first contacts occurred. They spoke of how they became aware of dance as an art form, saw their earliest dance performance live or on television, and finally sat before their initial contemporary dance presentation (which for 5 of them some was *Luna*).

Attending contemporary dance events like *Luna* was not a matter of birthright in the cultural context of Montréal. There is no systematic social mechanism by which Montréalers in general were introduced to dance spectating. For audience members like those in the focus groups, attending dance performances was a practice engaged in by a small subculture of Montréalers outside of their workplace activities.

Focus group spectators described their reactions to first dance performance experiences as ranging from "not very fond at first" and so requiring repeated exposure before a taste was acquired, to those who found themselves "immediately hooked." The latter even spoke of their experience in terms of being fatally stricken, as if falling in love or becoming addicted:

I have to do this. I have to go again and again. It's like an addiction. (Hobden, FG1)

What really started getting me hooked was seeing *La chambre blanche* by O Vertigo about ten years ago. And I just thought 'I've got to see more of this.' It seemed to be about me, in a way that just kept me going to the theater and hoping it would happen [again]. (Wilson, FG2)

These spectators' narratives revealed that initiation into contemporary dance spectating occurred at various stages of life and through a variety of means. It is interesting to note that, although contemporary dance spectators in general are relatively well educated (as shown in the next section), not one of the 22 focus group spectators

mentioned their educational institutions as the site of first contact or knowledge of dance.<sup>8</sup>

Although there was no single point or means of entry for their initial dance world and contemporary dance spectating experiences, I discovered in these focus groups 6 recurring motifs in which they: (a) were drawn into the dance world through dance classes; (b) had been brought to a performance by friends and relatives; (c) had discovered professional dance performances on television; (d) attended a popular dance performance (one that was well-known to the population in general); (e) came to *Luna* from professional interest as a fellow artists or arts educator; and (f) spontaneously chose to see *Luna* out of curiosity and a taste for the arts in general.

Youth and university dance classes provided fertile first contacts for some focus group spectators. Three women spoke about reluctantly taking ballet lessons as a small child, a practice that led all of them to develop a life-long interest in dance. Echoing the other two, Dura recalled:

My mother dragged me to ballet when I was six years old. I wasn't very fond of it at that age. I'd rather do things like climb trees. [But now] I just go [to dance performance] because I want to enjoy and think that's what gives meaning to the world. (Dura, FG1)

And Jerry Antonyk, who described himself as a dedicated dance spectator, discovered contemporary dance classes as a young adult at Concordia University in Montréal:

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<sup>8</sup> The exception was Jerry Antonyk, whose dance education began "accidentally" through a university dance class for non-dance majors.

I started getting interested accidentally at university [...] I wanted to do some exercise [...] and then I saw there was an extra-curricular activity in contemporary dance<sup>9</sup> so I decided well, I'll take it up. [...] I enjoyed it but found out my body couldn't do it! But I like the creativity behind it and I made friends in the dance community through the course, and I started to go to see dance performances. (Antonyk, FG1)

At least half the spectators in the focus groups mentioned that they had attended *Luna* in the company of acquaintances, relatives or work colleagues, as an occasion for socializing and/or by way of being introduced to an activity their dance-going companions already enjoyed. For instance, one mentioned that her first dance performances had been "opportunities to go out with friends" and one family had brought their daughter to *Luna*, her first experience with live contemporary dance (FG3). Another spectator told how his mother was an artist-writer who frequently took him along to all kinds of artistic performances as a child, and another was introduced by her brother to an earlier *O Vertigo* presentation. And after their retirement, two sisters had embarked on an epic journey together to initiate themselves to various kinds of arts events (and foreign lands), paid for by their recent lottery winnings. In their study of Québec arts spectators, Cloutier and Pronovost (1996) proposed the concept of "networks of sociability," illustrated by these *Luna* spectators, networks which they theorized as being more powerful determinants than people's ever-changing patterns of personal cultural practices.

Television proved to be another entry point into dance spectating for at least four focus group members. Enthusiastic "bar dancer" Jimmy Simard implied that watching professional dancers on television had actually incited and stimulated his desire to experience a live performance: "I [had] already

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<sup>9</sup> Two university dance departments in Montréal, at the *Université du Québec à Montréal* and Concordia University, offer various kinds of dance classes to non-majors.



watched dance performances on television [...] but to see it live is even better, even more stimulating" (FG3). Tembeck writes about an earlier period beginning in 1952 when Montréal's nascent ballet community brought their choreographic productions to television (1988a) "sporadically and then in a more constant manner" (p. 8), and there are currently two arts-specialty television stations available to Montréalers, *BravoArts!* and *ArTV*, who offer and even produce choreographies for the camera, interviews with dancers, and dance documentaries as a regular part of their programming.

Six out of 22 in this focus group (and maybe others who neglected to mention it) confirmed that their first exposure to a live professional dance performance was by way of one of Québec's widely popular offerings, dance events that had attracted spectators in the thousands: the Christmas classic of *The Nutcracker*, charismatic solo dancer Margie Gillis, *Le Dortoir* by the Carbon 14 theater company (in which dancing was featured), or the German dance company of Pina Bausch at the *Festival de nouvelle danse* de Montréal. (The latter two, although quite contemporary, became unusually popularized by way of wide media attention, critical acclaim, large publicity campaigns, and subject matter that garnered interest from a wide audience.) Their initial experiences led these six focus group members to a long-term commitment for dance in general, and eventually to develop a taste for contemporary dance in particular.

The five arts professionals (not dancers) who joined the *Luna* focus groups came to their first dance performances as a matter of vocational interest. As visual artist Kevin explained: "I think I got turned on to dance when I saw Pina Bausch [eighteen years ago]. [...] I'm a visual artist and you know, for me it's a way of acquiring different types of information" (FG2). These artist-spectators emphasized their passion for seeking out arts experiences in general, and depicted themselves as colleagues of the *O Vertigo* artistic creators.

And finally four first-time contemporary dance spectators, who had joined the focus groups, claimed that it was out of a spirit of curiosity, or love for expressive bodies and movement in general, that they had chosen to come to *Luna*. For instance, one student spectator spoke of his intense personal interest in the arts and a teenager told me of having chosen to accompany her parents to the *Luna* performance because of her life-long fascination for the beauty and grace she finds in dancing.

Of what importance are these first contacts? I propose that the circumstances and reactions to a first dance experience may provide significant grounds from which dance appreciation, a dance ethos and future engagement as an audience member might develop. The critical importance of first arts exposure, in particular those that occur early in life, were also confirmed by the cross-Canada study of arts "consumers" (*Cultur'Inc* and Decima Research, 1992). The results included the finding that Canadians who had been exposed to the arts as a child were far more likely to become interested in them later in life. I would suggest that future studies of spectators' initial dance experiences might do much to illuminate the nature and the impact of this crucial time and place of entry into the professional dance world.

### 5.6.3 Characteristics of the focus group members

At the beginning of audience focus group discussions, members voluntarily filled out survey sheets (Appendix E) in which I asked for their name, income level, gender, place of residence, profession, education and cultural identity. A summary the answers they provided when they filled out the form (in Tables 5.1.1 and 5.1.2) were the basis for the discussion below.

In this section, I will also look at implications of these characteristics in view of determining the nature of the *Luna* event, and introduce comparative statistics from various North American audience studies (*Cultur'Inc* and Decima Research, 1991; CROP, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1992 and 1997; Samson Bélair, 1990; Sussman, 1998).

(a) Education. The contemporary dance spectators in these focus groups had a relatively high educational level, with 15 out of 22 (68%) having some university education or possessing a university degree (Table 5.1.1). In comparison and according to the last statistics available (in 1996), only a small proportion or 25% of the general population of the Montréal metropolitan area were university educated (*Ville de Montréal*, 2005).

The tendency of contemporary dance audiences -- variously called modern<sup>10</sup>, "dance other than ballet," postmodern or *nouvelle danse* in survey questionnaires -- to be relatively well-educated in comparison to the public-at-large was also confirmed in the findings of several large-scale studies of arts and dance audiences made in the U.S.A. by the National Endowment for the Arts (1992; 1997), across Canada (*Les Consultants Cultur'inc* and Decima Research, 1991), and in Québec (*Samson Bélair*, 1990; CROP, 2001). In the case of the 2001 *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montreal*, where *O Vertigo* performed *Luna* and the focus groups were convened for this study, the CROP audience poll of 1,295 spectators also concluded that "the clientele of FIND is highly educated as compared to the population in general (72% were at a university level)" <sup>xxx</sup> (CROP, 2001, pp. 1-2).

At least two questions arise from these findings that merit further attention from researchers. Is the activity of watching contemporary dance, at least for North American audiences, considered an intellectual pursuit

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<sup>10</sup> Sussman (1996) points out in her analysis of the National Endowment for the Arts studies, made in 1992 and 1997, that the term "modern dance" was so often misunderstood by informants in the NEA studies as to cause the findings on this kind of dance to be negligible.

requiring a relatively high level education and in consequence attracting the highly educated? In fact, I found (as a later chapter will explain) that *Luna* focus group spectators expressed at least five categories of motivation for contemporary dance-going, with “intellectual reflection” being cited as only one among others. The second question: is the large percentage of highly educated spectators in contemporary dance audiences the result of an educational system that doesn’t tend to introduce students to the kind of knowledge required to appreciate the contemporary arts until they are at higher levels of education? It is a fact that in Québec the few nascent programs for teaching dance in the elementary and secondary schools are once again on the decline because of budget cuts.

(b) Income. Another common feature among these 22 focus group members was their relatively modest income level. From the evidence of these discussions and survey sheets (Table 5.1.1) it appears that attending the *Luna* performance was the choice of mainly middle income arts-goers, the average income of Montréalers being about 25,000\$ (in the last available statistic on the website of the *Ville de Montréal*, 2005), but virtually no low income workers at all (at least none were detected in all of the research here). Only six out of 22 spectators<sup>11</sup> (27%), but none of the artists among them, earned more than 30,000\$ a year (four out of the six higher earners might be members of the upper middle or wealthy classes, having indicated earning over 45,000\$ a year).

It is tempting to presume that ticket prices in Montréal are a deciding factor for spectator’s choice of performance, but in fact the cost of the ticket for the *Luna* presentations included in my fieldwork varied from a relatively costly 32\$ general admission to a more accessible 15\$ for students. (As a point of comparison with other artistic events in Montréal: a ticket to the cinema currently vacillates between 8\$ and 12\$, while seeing a popular music

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<sup>11</sup> One spectator left a blank in answer to the question on income.

spectacle in the largest venue in town hovers around 50\$+). In Chicoutimi the tickets were 24\$, but reduced to 15\$ for accessibility to the CEGEP students in the surrounding buildings; in New York City they were more expensive, at 32\$, with a reduction to 19\$ for those who paid to be members of the theater; and at the Montréal presentations, tickets were sold at 30\$ and 25\$ (depending on seat location) with a more reasonable 15\$ for students and seniors.

It is likely that the largely middle class, professional and well-educated spectators felt comfortable with the values and ideas expressed at these performances, from the informal dress code to the innovative style and content of the dances. This fact is made clear in the Cultur'Inc. and Decima Research study (1991), in which the psychographic profiles of Canadian arts-goers demonstrated that by-and-large they attended contemporary art in the interest of intellectual pursuits.

(d) Gender. The focus group discussions didn't yield any conversation about the sexes, but the gender composition of the groups raises the subject of male and female participation in the audiences the contemporary dance world in general and this dance event in particular.

Of the *Luna* focus group members, 10 were women and 12 were men (Table 5.1.1). In other words, despite the fact that equal representation of the sexes was not an explicit goal, I received an almost equal number of each sex to the post-performance discussions. In fact this is not representative of the gender breakdown of most contemporary dance audiences in which women have been usually predominant (*Les Consultants Cultur'inc* and Decima Research, 1991; CROP, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1992 and 1997; Samson Bélair, 1990; Sussman, 1998). It is impossible to say why I happened to secure the participation of this unusually large proportion of men, but four of them came along to accompany their wives who expressed the initial interest in focus group participation.



In contrast, the CROP study summary (2001) of spectators attending the festival in which *O Vertigo* performed – the 2001 edition of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montreal* – found that among spectators at this festival, 70% were women (pp. 1-2). And an extensive 1992 cross-Canadian audience study, in the category of occasional dance spectators who had seen one or two contemporary dance performances during a previous season, yielded a similar gender breakdown of 67% women and 33% men (*Cultur'inc* and Decima Research, 1991, p. 287).

These North American audience profiles provide evidence that, despite the large proportion of men in the small sample of the *Luna* focus groups, attending performances is a predominantly female preoccupation in this geographical context. A comparison of the three existing CROP studies from the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal* gives conclusive evidence of an increasing feminization of their audiences (2001). This notion of contemporary dance as predominantly a female activity correlates with the low number of men registered in professional dance training programs like the *O Vertigo* summer workshop, and is reinforced also in some of the biographies of male dancers in this chapter (I-PL, I-KN, I-DR).

(d) Age. The audience focus group members ranged in age from 16 to 66 (Table 5.1.1). As it turned out, this focus group sample of 22 spectators falls within such a wide age range -- from student spectators in their late teens to professionals at various career stages, and including retired persons -- that the views of several generations of dance-goers (spanning six decades) were recorded in this study.

The age range of the 22 *Luna* focus group members resembled in fact that of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal* in general, as confirmed by the CROP survey (2001). The CROP consulting firm found that 26% of festival spectators were under 24 years, 47% between 25-44 years, and a last 27% were over 45 years.



It appears that, at the time of this study, contemporary dance in Montréal in general was attended by a large span of age groups, although predominated by adults who had not yet reached middle age, and more rarely young children and senior citizens. In the *Luna* audience focus groups, the youngest member was 16 year old Andrea Simard who had come along with her parents and found passion and emotion in the choreography, while the oldest was Jeannine Hubert had waited 65 years to discover the pleasure, as she put it, of admiring young and agile bodies dancing skillfully and energetically (FG3). And so a specific category of age seems not to have been a determining factor, nor a marked characteristic of those who chose to attend *Luna*.

(d) Profession. All of the spectators in the three *Luna* audience focus groups were either students, artists or white-collar professionals: 3 pre-university students, 2 retired sisters (of whom one had been a nurse and the other a secretary), 3 were practicing dancers, three were teachers of various kinds, 2 visual artists, a music professor, a linguistics researcher, a hand-sign interpreter for the deaf, an osteopath (specializing in dance injuries), a tour manager, a medical secretary and a project manager, a translator, a salesman, and an *intervenant en démystification* (a term for which I was unable to find an English translation) (Table 5.1.1).

Thus people from a wide variety of vocational orientations found themselves attending my post-show focus groups. Not surprisingly, many focus groups members were directly or indirectly involved in the art world, and so motivated to stay after a performance to enrich their evening's experience. But most fascinating to my mind were those whose day jobs suggested no evident connection to the arts. For these working people, as proposed above and we shall see in a later section, dance-going is a choice and interest practiced within their non-working hours. And so for some, as a

later chapter will reveal, dance-going brought the kinds of meaning to their lives that their workplace didn't provide.

The CROP consultants (2001) came to similar conclusions about the professional and student composition of the *Festival de nouvelle danse à Montréal* audiences. They expressed this idea in terms of four employee types: "[...] it (the festival audience clientele) contained many professionals (45%), semi-professionals, technicians and white collar workers (45%) [...]" <sup>xxxi</sup> (pp. 1-2). They added that the 2001 festival had attracted an unprecedented proportion of students at 25%, principally from the artistic disciplines (CROP, 2001). Only 5% of those interviewed claimed vocational orientations outside of professional and white-collar, while in my own study there were none at all. This can be seen to correlate with the characteristic of higher education, which is usually a prerequisite for entering these kinds of vocations, as is clearly the case among *Luna* focus group members (Tables 5.1.1 and 5.1.2).

(f) Ethnicity/cultural identity. The answers to the "cultural question" from focus group members ranged from a proposition of national identities such as Québécois, Canadian and Swedish; to regional allegiances expressed as *Saguenéenne* (from Saguenay), *Jeannoise* (from Lac St-Jean), "*un bleuet*" ("a blueberry" and so from the blueberry-producing Lac St-Jean region), and *Iles de La Madeleine* among others; to hyphenated hybrid nationalities such as Canadian-Ukrainian, Irish-Canadian, and *Africaine-Québécoise moitié-moitié* (African-Québécoise half and half) (Table 5.1.2).

Of what importance might be these various cultural identities when determining the nature and meaning of the *Luna* dance event? This kind of event, as exemplified by these focus groups, includes dancing and non-dancing participants from a vast array of cultures. Each of the regional and national groups cited by audience focus group participants (Irish, Québécois, African, Swedish, etc.) has a particular history with, and set of values

concerning, the body, dance and dancing. As dance anthropologists have been contending for several decades, these culturally distinct groups possess certain historic, aesthetic movement preferences and themes for their adherents and an ever-evolving national folkdance style with regional variants, as embodied in their own traditional and vernacular social dances. And so the cultural background of *Luna* spectators (and all participants), an inevitable part of their education and upbringing, contributed in some way to determining the character of their choreographic outlook and so the manner in which *Luna* was experienced and interpreted. Although the effects of cultural identity were not discussed specifically during the focus groups, evidence of cultural influence on the understanding of dance events will arise throughout this study.

(g) Place of residence. All but 3 audience focus group members were currently living in Montréal or Chicoutimi, where the dance performances were held, or drove in from nearby towns and cities. Of the remaining three, one didn't write in his place of residence, one was from Victoria, British Columbia, and another from Sweden (Table 5.1.2).

In the province of Québec there is very little professional contemporary dance developing outside of metropolitan Montréal. And from information gleaned during my recent participation in a consulting committee for the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec*, regional encouragement of professional dance outside of Montréal will not become state policy any time soon<sup>12</sup>. With the exception of countries that have developed a policy of "arts decentralization" (supporting the growth of the arts in smaller centers as in Holland, England and France), contemporary dance performances throughout the Occident are largely concentrated in large cities.

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<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of this consultation session I asked my assembled colleagues for permission, which they granted, to paraphrase some of the ideas that would arise for inclusion in my doctoral thesis.

In terms of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*, where *Luna* was performed, the small proportion of out-of-town tourists attending was reflected also in the CROP audience study (2001). In their summary, the CROP consultants concluded that only 10% of the audience came from outside of the metropolitan region of Montréal.

Those focus group spectators like Renaud who came from smaller cities like Sherbrooke and smaller still towns like Alma, spoke about the lack of access to dance in their locality, the difficulty of getting to see dance and their commitment to traveling long distances to see performances when necessary and possible:

[...] there aren't many performances in the region, so you have to get yourself there even if you're from Alma! [Alma] is pretty far away [for us], so we don't get to all of the dance performances. Because when it's winter, and there's a snowstorm, you don't go to Alma! <sup>xxxii</sup> (FG3)

The most striking factor in terms of the spectators' place of residence was that 18 out of 22 spectators identified themselves as urban dwellers, whether from large or small cities and towns. Among the other 4, one couple drove into see dance in Sherbrooke from a rural town (*La Patrie*) and two others who lived in nearby cities thought of themselves as suburbanites (e.g. living in residential areas on the outskirts of large cities). Since most contemporary dance is created in urban environments by artists who are urban-dwellers, as I know from experience, perhaps it is no surprise that this kind of cosmopolitan art doesn't draw massive interest from rural and suburban spectators. The vast majority of choreographers in Québec are urban dwellers, as is true for Laurin, and from my own observations they tend to generate work (with exceptions of course) that reflects urban dweller's themes and views. There is so little interest for contemporary dance in smaller Québec communities

outside of Montréal (as demonstrated by ticket sales and general lack of knowledge of these forms) that-- which is cause and which effect? – few performances are even brought in by local arts presenters for them to see.

## 5.7 Conclusion

This massive collection of stories recounts the diverse twists and turns of *Luna* participants' lives in dance. But more, among and between the lines of the tale-telling is a group portrait of how this small sub-culture of Montréalers came to engage in a dance practice for which there was (and still is) scant social sanction. It can now be imagined the way in which they form a cooperative network and how the roles of each one meshed with one another through their individual contributions.

Through their oral histories and written texts has emerged a sense of the environments in which they were raised, as they hindered or instigated an emerging sensibility of the contemporary art world. The diversity is stunning and demonstrates that there was clearly no single path to their engagement with dance. Attempts to reduce this chapter to a neat, succinct "figure" failed over and over in the face of the complexity of this matrix of interrelated lives and roles. Only a few common patterns emerged from the text: (a) they were comparatively well educated; (b) many were irrepressible "expressive movers" from their youth and seekers of creative outlets, and (c) with only a couple of exceptions (dancer Barry and dance writer Brody) none came from the wealthy classes.

Also inscribed into the texts in this chapter are the dance views and notions that animated their actions in the dance event, the ways in which they went about their participation and glimmers of insight as to why. And so this copious weave of lives in dance lays part of the foundation for Part III of this

ethnography in which I will more closely examine the kinds of meanings that the dance event and the performance of *Luna* came to have for each of them.



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Original French texts

<sup>i</sup> "Chez *O Vertigo*, il y a une directrice artistique qui fait toutes les créations. Donc, tu travailles pour quelqu'un, pour un individu. Et pour moi, tu es à la merci de tous les états d'âme d'une seule et unique personne [...] on a beau donner des titres à n'importe qui, directeur général de ..., il n'y a rien qui va passer en haut de cette personne." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>ii</sup> Ginette: "Ils ont le droit à une autre prise que vous." Ken: "Est-ce que j'ai le droit de leur suggérer quelque chose?" Ginette: "Oui. Mais Patrick a le droit de ne pas l'écouter." From fieldnotes.

<sup>iii</sup> "C'est mon rôle à moi et Raymond de faire en sorte que les danseurs soient toujours disponibles à envoyer quelque chose et à recevoir aussi." Ginette Laurin

<sup>iv</sup> "Le chorégraphe est la personne maîtresse, c'est la 'personne orchestre,' c'est sa vision, c'est lui qu'il faut croire." Denis Lavoie

<sup>v</sup> "[...] j'avais fait le deuil d'être professeur d'arts plastiques et je retrouvais dans la danse un langage, une communication et une musicalité que je me rendais compte que j'aimais beaucoup, beaucoup. Aussi, le voyage m'intéressait de plus en plus. Et la danse, ce langage universel, me permettait finalement d'aller travailler un peu partout dans le monde, de voyager tout en travaillant et de rencontrer des gens." Raymond Brisson

<sup>vi</sup> "[...] un rôle en évolution. C'est un rôle difficile à cerner. Certains l'appellent répétiteur, directeur des répétitions, assistant chorégraphe, assistant à la direction artistique... C'est un peu tout ça. Je le résume souvent à un rôle 'd'accompagnateur.' J'accompagne le danseur, j'accompagne la directrice artistique. [...] Les accompagner à la poursuite de ce que la chorégraphe cherche. Aider le danseur aussi avec sa propre intégrité en tant qu'interprète, en tant qu'individu." Raymond Brisson

<sup>vii</sup> "J'aime toujours la danse avec le feu et la passion [comme auparavant] mais je peux maintenant la concevoir comme un métier méticuleux comme celui de l'horlogier ou de l'orfèvre." Mélanie Demers

<sup>viii</sup> "Il faut très vite être identifié en danse, surtout pour les filles, mais tu peux tout de même le faire par plaisir. Pour moi de ne pas avoir été identifié n'aurait pas été une si grande déception puisque je dansais beaucoup par plaisir et je continuais d'étudier le soir. Je n'avais pas de plan de carrière, ça c'est certain. Il ne faut pas dans ce métier-là aspirer tout de suite à faire une carrière en danse. L'idée de la passion doit venir avant." Ginette Laurin

<sup>ix</sup> "Ce travail-là, je pense que c'est un travail de 'représentation'. C'est d'essayer de traduire la réalité dans un mode poétique. Puis c'est à travers le corps." Mélanie Demers

<sup>x</sup> "[...] nous ont dit travailler sur son 'jardin intérieur.' C'est quelque chose que le danseur va apprendre pendant le processus de création. Il va essayer de trouver l'essence de son rôle, ou de la danse en général, et comment continuer à cultiver ça. Et souvent, en répétition, après 20 spectacles ou 40

spectacles, normalement ils font à peu près 80 spectacles d'une même pièce...alors, parfois, on revient à l'essence. On essaie de se rappeler à quoi on a pensé quand on a créé la section, qu'est-ce que je cherchais, à quoi j'ai fait référence, de quoi on a parlé, c'est quoi la petite étincelle qui a parti la création de cette séquence-là." Ginette Laurin

<sup>xi</sup> "On comprend l'ambiance par exemple. C'est à nous de nourrir ce jardin-là, qui a une certaine couleur, une certaine odeur, c'est à nous de dire les fleurs qui ne vont pas dans ça, on ne les met pas dans ça. Comprends-tu? On a de la place pour amener l'interprétation, mais ça reste dans une ambiance, un univers précis." Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>xii</sup> "Mon père étant parti, je pouvais faire ce que j'aimais." Kha Nguyen

<sup>xiii</sup> "[...] j'aime bien ce qu'ils font [...] Mais la structure de la compagnie en tant que telle, tous les jours, ça ne me convient pas." Kha Nguyen

<sup>xiv</sup> "...j'avais une rage à l'intérieur parce que je voyais que c'était juste les enfants riches qui pouvaient le faire. Et je me suis dit : FINI! Moi je vais danser sur le plancher et ça ne coûtera pas un 'cent'!" Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>xv</sup> "J'étais vraiment maniaque!" Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>xvi</sup> "C'est trop, trop de beat." Ginette Laurin

<sup>xvii</sup> "Moi, j'arrive avec des propositions musicales, mais c'est très incomplet. J'arrive avec des propositions pour donner l'atmosphère, l'ambiance, certaines pièces musicales que j'ai déjà trouvées pour certaines séquences, et il s'agit, pour lui, de compléter. Il fait une recherche particulière. Parfois il va créer des sons pour la pièce, et il fait l'assemblage de tout ça à la fin." Ginette Laurin

<sup>xviii</sup> "[...] rêve en couleurs. Il fait son travail de créateur, il crée sans contraintes. [...] Et moi je le ramène sur terre, mais il faut que je trouve une façon de le ramener qui va aller dans le sens de ses idées [...] à l'intérieur de budgets et de contraintes de production qui me sont donnés via mes patrons." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xix</sup> "Ça marche, ça ne marche pas, pas pire. [...] Et si on allait avec les images comme ça, plus court, 30 secondes? [...] Enlèves tout ce qui est pâle." [...] "Presque, mais pas au début."

<sup>xx</sup> "[...] ma fonction c'est de m'assurer que Ginette soit défendue artistiquement. Parce que dans un C.A. on peut avoir tendance, des fois, à aller du côté des affaires pour rentabiliser la compagnie – on coupe trois semaines de salaire [et ainsi] on envoie les danseurs au chômage ou on ne fait pas de chorégraphie. Moi, je me suis toujours arrangé pour défendre le point de vue de Ginette et éviter qu'on devienne une compagnie sans trop d'image." Claude Gosselin

<sup>xxi</sup> "[...] je n'étais pas du tout spécialisée pour la danse. J'étais 'neuve' pour la danse." Lise Clément

xxii "Je suis un garçon qui vient de la banlieue, avec tout ce que ça comporte en signification, banlieue. Quelqu'un d'apolitique, sans culture, zéro!" Jocelyn Proulx

xxiii "C'est ce que je veux faire, c'est ce que je veux essayer." Jocelyn Proulx

xxiv "[...] j'avais tout à apprendre sur ce qu'est la danse [et] sur quoi on se base pour lancer des effets, qu'est-ce qu'on fait avec ça comme technicien." Jocelyn Proulx

xxv "[...] je ne développe pas énormément la théorie autour de l'oeuvre de l'artiste. Je me contente de la présenter. [...] Parce ce qu'il y a la didacture du *statement of force*, [ce qui veut dire que] quand les gens voient un texte, une idée développée, alors là, l'oeuvre devient meilleure. J'ai un peu de difficulté avec ça [...]." Claude Gosselin

xxvi "[L'enregistreuse] peut les faire fuir. Ça risque de leurs nuire..." Louise Beaulieu.

xxvii "[...] pour moi, le sacré, c'est très, très près de l'artiste, et ce sont peut-être les personnes qui touchent, d'une façon quotidienne, le plus près le sacré à travers leurs oeuvres." Diane Boucher

xxviii "Mettre en valeur le travail d'artiste." Diane Boucher

xxix "[...] on est un peu le lien entre le public et l'art, et le chorégraphe. Donc, on fait tout pour que le public comprenne ce que l'artiste essaie de dire. [...] C'est de choisir les gens qui ont quelque chose à dire et le disent d'une façon intéressante, articulée, et trouver la meilleure façon pour transmettre ce qu'ils veulent dire au public en général, au grand public, à tout le monde. Et, à travers ça, utiliser tous les moyens possibles que ce soient des textes, des films, des présentations, des ateliers, que ce soient toutes sortes de choses [...]." Diane Boucher

xxx "[...] la clientèle du FIND est fortement scolarisée comparativement à la population en général (72% niveau universitaire) [...]" CROP

xxxi "[...] elle [la clientèle du FIND] regroupe beaucoup de professionnels (45%), de semi-professionnels, de techniciens et de cols blancs (45%) [...]." (CROP, 2001)

xxdii "[...] il n'y a pas beaucoup de spectacles en région. On se déplace même si on est d'Alma! C'est quand même un peu loin. Alors, on ne se prend pas tous les spectacles de danse puisque l'hiver, quand il y a une tempête, on ne se déplace [pas] à Chicoutimi." Emma Renaud

## CHAPTER VI

### WHERE (SPACE) AND WHEN (TIME): *LUNA*'S PLACES AND LOCATIONS, TIME AND TIMINGS

Where and when did the *Luna* event take place? The particular temporal organization and physical settings and configurations of *Luna* not only provided a fundamental descriptive component of this ethnography, but formed a crucial part of the event framework through which the meanings of *Luna* have been interpreted.

In Snyder's model of the dance event (1988, 1992), each macro- and micro-level of event activity was associated with a particular variety of time and space. In her scheme, as in mine, time and space refers to the event's historical era and geographic locations on the macro-level, but they also take the form of the day-to-day activities and the physical places and spaces where the event took place. On the smallest micro-level, and described in some detail in the previous chapter on what happened, *Luna*'s space and time were seen as the elements of choreographic spacing and timing within the dance composition. Although some aspects of *Luna*'s time and space are common to many Western performing arts events in general, some of the particularities of *Luna* described below also distinguish this dance event as unique among other contemporary dance events of its kind, and mark it as different in form and function from other dance forms that cohabit the Montréal urban landscape such as competitive sport dancing and break dancing.

And so in this chapter, the specific shapes, textures, temperatures, light and colors of these spaces, places and stagings, contribute to describing

the unique character of the dance being made and to the meanings that it has come to have for its participants. Like Small (1998), I am certain that the way in which spaces are designed and organized reflect the art views of the previous participants. For example, in the kinds of large-scale theaters in which *Luna* was performed, artists and audiences were kept completely separate from each other, and technicians were kept invisible to spectators. And for instance, a floor-to-ceiling scrim curtain created both a projection screen and the division of *Luna*'s stage into two superimposed areas (foreground and background), giving the choreography a unique spatial configuration and metaphoric "universe" of two domains.

The factor of time also emerged from the *Luna* data as a multi-faceted phenomenon, implicating an art historical era, minutely scheduled timetables, the experience of its transformation from "real" to "theatrical" time, and the complex timings and time signatures of the movement phrases. At least three characteristic ideas about time emerged from the data: (a) that time was precisely measured and meticulously managed, (b) that the theatrical time of the choreography was designed to take participants' consciousness out of ordinary, everyday time and into an imaginary choreographic universe and (c) that *Luna* was meant to be a futuristic dance "of its time" providing glimpses of a near, possible future for the interface of science and art.

### 6.1.2 Space as place

The places in which the event unfolded can be described both in terms of their actual physical locations and their socio-cultural characteristics and histories. My attention in the field was drawn to several kinds of spaces at once, under the influence of Snyder's hierarchy of dance event levels (1988).

This section begins with a general survey of the types of places in which dance event activities were located. It then takes a wide-angled



examination of the physical locations of the event, then moving in closer to consider the municipal settings and neighborhoods, and the outer environments of the buildings which housed the dance event activities. It will then focus in more tightly on the functional design of the buildings' interior spaces while paying special attention to the organization of *O Vertigo's* offices and studios, and two of the theater buildings in which they performed.

#### 6.1.1.1 General survey of the types of places

Where in the world did this dance event take place? The field was initially located in Montréal, but the event also moved to other cities on three continents as it "went on the road." In other words, as brought to the forefront in Amit's anthology on the subject (2000), *Luna's* field was mobile and multi-sited.

The largest quantity of my fieldwork was done in *O Vertigo's* offices and studios in the east end of Montréal, where the creative and administrative processes took place. I also attended four of final public performances of *Luna* in theater buildings, invariably located in downtown city centers. The dance event also took me to places like a performing arts marketplace event in a hotel ballroom, other dance studios around the city where auditions and workshops were held, and to a technical rehearsal and filming session in a city-sponsored cultural center. I followed the *O Vertigo* dance company on one of their tours of *Luna* to the *Théâtre du Saguenay* in Chicoutimi, and later sought out some of the traces left further afield by their residency and premiere performance in Lucerne's *Lucern Theater* and the New York City performances at the Joyce Theater, through interviews with programmers and dancers, and by way of critiques written by dance specialists about the *Luna* performance.



And so although the *Luna* choreography was principally conceived and created within its home studios in Montréal, it was completed during a residency in Lucerne, Switzerland. It was there that finishing touches were given to the costumes, make-up and lighting, and the opening performances took place. *Luna* was then mounted and presented on tour (as articulated in the hyperbolic prose of publicists):

[in] more than 70 times in forty cities in Canada, the United States, France, Switzerland, Germany, England, Scotland, Hungary, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Italy and the Czech Republic where it was applauded by more than 30, 000 spectators. (Laplander, 2000; Appendix I)

In the widest possible sense, the dance event was also conceived, planned, created, discussed and evaluated in the various restaurants, cafés, homes, studios and offices where event participants lived, worked or socialized, in Montréal and in the other cities to which it traveled.

#### 6.1.1.2 Event locations: province, city, neighborhood and buildings

The physical locations of the *Luna* event reveal much more, of course, than the latitude and longitude, the height and width of its dancing grounds. They also situated it in particular political, economic, socio-cultural and physical environments that fostered (and sometimes hindered) its creation and presentation. Although this is neither a historical nor geographical study, I have sketched out below some of these contexts to give a sense of place to the goings on.

(a) The province of Québec, city of Montréal. The creative processes and four performances of *Luna* took place in *O Vertigo's* home city of Montréal, situated in the province of Québec in the northeastern part of North America. It is one of Canada's three largest cosmopolitan urban centers, along with Vancouver and Toronto, with a population of about 3 1/2 million people living within the Montréal Metropolitan area according to the last statistics available in 1996 (*Ville de Montréal*, 2005). The metropolis was built on an island and is surrounded by the waters of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Montréal is situated in the comparatively temperate climate of the southern part of the province with about six months of winter weather, although several weeks of markedly sub-zero temperatures. And looking to the south, the city is only an hour's drive from the United States' border, and in proximity of eight hours drive from North America's most prolific art dance mecca (in terms of sheer quantity of dance and dancers) of New York City.

The province of Québec is the geographic seat and last preserve of Canada's distinct French-speaking Québécois culture, one that shares a common linguistic, historical, literary and artistic heritage. Dance historian Tembeck (1988a) traces the "cultural awakening" of Québécois to an economic crisis in 1930 in which the established order was rejected, leading to what is now called The Quiet Revolution (*La révolution tranquille*). This phase of social change led to the 1948 manifesto *Le Refus Global* whose signatories were artists, including dancers like Jeanne Renaud and Françoise Sullivan. She further noted that in "the frantic race towards the modernization of Québec, the gesture posed by those who signed the *Refus Global* was of an evident symbolism. It broke with the past, whatever it was. The notion of individuation of discourse became more and more pronounced. The image of the artist that was brought forward was that of a rebellious and liberating intellectual" (p. 8). This was still part of the artistic ethos that I encountered

in 1977<sup>1</sup> when only a new immigrant to Québec, that is the notion of dance as a site from which to provoke social discourse and as a pathway to freedom. I believe this is still a strong element of the dance climate in Montréal contemporary dance today, as will be seen especially in the later discussion about the meanings of *Luna* in the lives and minds of its Québécois participants.

Montréal is also a cosmopolitan urban environment, and the population also includes several waves of immigrants from many parts of the world, and the subtle but certain presence of First Nations people (who mostly live on nearby reserves like Kahawake). It is interesting to note that choreographer Laurin, although of Québécoise heritage, has always chosen to reflect this fact of cultural diversity in her choice of dancers (the *Luna* cast included dancers of Québécois, German, Asian-Australian, Vietnamese, English Canadian and American nationalities). And, as was noted in her short biography in the previous chapter, Tembeck herself was an Egyptian immigrant to Canada.

(b) The Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighborhood, downtown Montréal and Chicoutimi. The *O Vertigo* dance company works out of their permanent studios and offices in the low-income, industrial neighborhood of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve in the eastern end of the city. Company technical director Jocelyn Proulx calls the area "*l'industrie perdue*," literally meaning "an industrial area that is lost" (in the sense of forgotten, deserted or forlorn). In contrast, and to the immediate north of their studios looms the massive Olympic Stadium tower and Botanical Gardens, preferred tourist destinations. And one long block to the south is the neighborhood's heritage center piece : the lively and colorful Marché Maisonneuve farmer's market and community center. During the period of my fieldwork, the dance

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<sup>1</sup> See Tembeck (1991, 1994a) for a historical account of Québec artistic dance.

company was engaged in a long-term project, hoping to renovate and move their workplace, as Laurin confided to me one day in the kitchen, to an even less expensive (because shared with Théâtre Ubu) and more centrally located heritage building.<sup>2</sup>

The professional dance performances (other than informal in-studio showings) included in this study all took place in downtown areas, as did all other presentations of *Luna* throughout its touring itinerary. In Montréal, the *Monument-National* building where the festival performances were held, was wedged between two neighborhoods with strong characters, but unrelated to the contemporary art world: the Chinatown and sex trade districts.

The city of Chicoutimi was a 6 1/2 hour bus ride northeast from Montréal, and had one main street about 12 blocks long. From downtown there was a beautiful view of the Fjord Saguenay that ran alongside, a landscape of river and hills. The *Théâtre du Saguenay* in which *Luna* was performed was perched high on a grassy hill, in isolation on the far side of town but part of the massive, sprawling campus of the *CEGEP de Chicoutimi*, a post-secondary educational institution.

It is interesting to recall from the last chapter that the vast majority of audience members in the focus groups identified themselves as urban dwellers, including those from Chicoutimi and surrounding smaller towns. At least in the case of *Luna*, but also from my extensive experiences as a dance presenter, it appears that contemporary dance is largely an urban artists' practice, rarely present and flourishing in the isolation of rural settings as do, for instance, some musicians, writers and visual artists.

(c) Workplace building: the *O Vertigo* studios. The *O Vertigo* offices and studios were housed in a rented one-story storefront industrial building

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<sup>2</sup> After many years of lobbying, a newly elected conservative government in Québec turned them down in fall 2004, and they finally moved their studios into subterranean spaces in Place des Arts downtown in 2005.

(see photo 2) and my drawing of the interior spaces (Appendix H). The dance company developed their choreographic project *Luna* in close proximity to a Cuisinart sales company with little awareness of the artistic goings-on next door, as I discovered one day when I knocked on their door to ask a few questions. In the center of their workplace and in-between the studio and office spaces was the kitchen area (photos 3 and 9). It was a space whose only natural light came from a skylight, and contained table and chairs, sofa, and bulletin boards filled with company memorabilia and activity grids. Just off the kitchen were bathrooms. In practice, small meetings and company break times were held in this space, set up to accommodate discussions, reading, writing, socializing, eating and drinking. Office spaces were at the front of the building. The receptionist and other assistant employees worked in an open entrance area and hallway filled with plants and natural light (see photo 4). This area led to four enclosed office spaces offering private space to each of the four directors: artistic, general, technical and communications.

At the back and behind the kitchen were one small (photo 6) and one large (photo 5) dance studio. The small one included storage space for costumes and equipment, and provided an auxiliary rehearsal space (usually) away from the watchful eyes of the choreographer and rehearsal director who worked mainly in the large one. It also provided an additional place for tasks requiring room to spread out, e.g. assembling press kits, costume fittings.

The large dance studio was the creative nexus in which artistic director Laurin, her artistic collaborators and dancers spent most of their time immersed in the processes of choreography. It had the look of an industrial building: massive gray cinderblock outer walls and huge silver duct tape-wrapped ventilation tubes running across the high ceilings (photo 6). Stage equipment and storage spaces added to this factory ambiance. Another bulletin board was filled with photos, announcements, and appreciative

letters from schoolchildren to the dancers from company school workshops. There were black window curtains to block out the daylight almost entirely when working with theatrical lighting, a wall covered with tall mirrors, benches, tables and chairs for technicians and onlookers. Brightly colored exercise balls and mats in relief to the gray room, were lying around for the dancers to use during the break times for personal off-time bodywork.

This large studio served as a surrogate to the theaters in which *Luna* would eventually be performed. And so as soon as the basic set pieces and costumes were finished, they were brought in and gradually over four months they accumulated around the perimeter of the studio: the tall lenses on stands (see photos I and 7), black "flats" (cloth panels) simulating the eventual "wings" (offstage spaces) of the stage, larger-than-life sized silky moon-like dresses (see photo 8), and a transparent "scrim" (transparent cotton curtain, called "*tulle*" in French) that separated the stage space into two areas upstage and downstage.

Because the administrators and choreographer were ever attentive to dancers' comfort and safety, the air was kept well ventilated by ceiling fans, cool in the summer and warm enough in the winter to facilitate the physically demanding dance-making. There was a sound system in the corner, and a bookcase full of archival company videos, videotapes for use during creative process, and music compact discs. Some kind of ambient sound, usually chosen by the rehearsal director in accordance with the mood desired by the choreographer, was usually playing as the dancers worked, eventually replaced by the music chosen and arranged that would accompany the final choreography.

Of special note was the surface and resilience of the dance floor, which in my experience I have found to be a seminal feature of professional dance spaces. The dancing surface was so important to *O Vertigo*, in fact, that the dance company went to the trouble and expense of transporting their flooring along with them on tour. A key to the movement style of each contemporary



choreographer is established by the kind of friction they choose to create in the contact between the dancers' foot soles or footwear and the dance floor surface, i.e. to what extent the dancers can either slide or stick to the ground as they dance. Laurin's *Luna* dancers were barefoot on the rubber surface, requiring sure-footedness to accomplish her intricate movements, rather than slipperiness under their feet. And having a familiar surface underneath them, which could cover any potentially dangerous irregularities of stage floors in unfamiliar theaters, was a factor in keeping physical conditions amenable to dancers' safety and *Luna*'s choreographic quality intact.

As suggested above, the ambiance of the large studio was gradually transformed over the four months of creative work on *Luna* from a utilitarian everyday workplace into a prototype for the large-scale theatrical stages on which they would be performing. One day in late November I entered the studio to the smell of rubber and paint: the new dance floor for *Luna* had arrived! This time the ever-present black surface was marble textured with white, black, blue and purple paint applied in splotches and streaks. Towards the end of the creation process the curtains were most often completely sealed in order to complete the change over to the theatrical effects made possible by artificial lighting sources in a darkened space. The "real world" of the working dancers in a studio had fully become the theatrical time and space of *Luna*'s "imaginary choreographic universe."

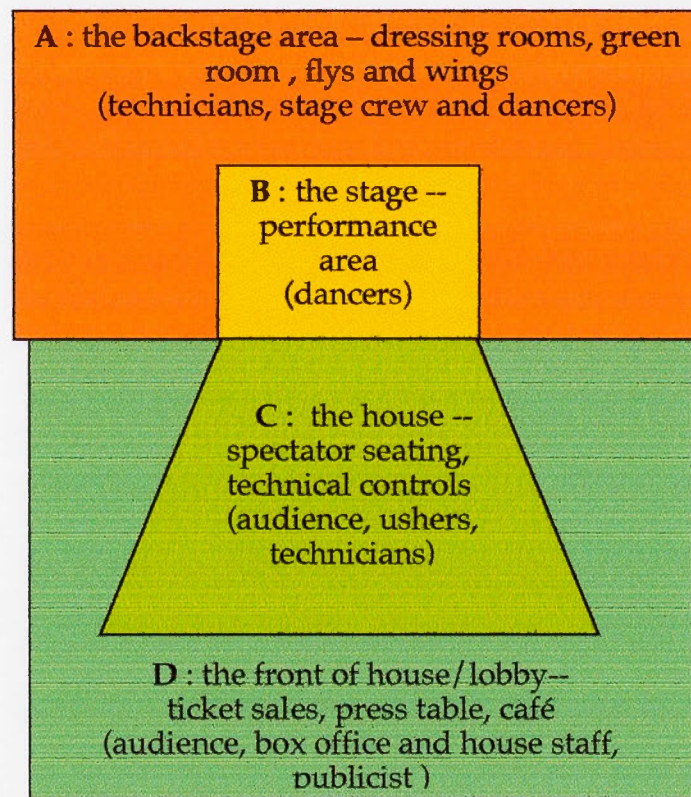
(d) Theater buildings: the Monument-National and Théâtre du Sagnuenay. The *Luna* choreography was designed for a traditional frontally-oriented Western performing arts facility and theater in which there were completely separate spaces for the activities of audiences, administrators and artists, as Christopher Small (1998) observed in his ethnography of a prototypical Western music concert hall.

The architecture of these kinds of buildings and the ambiance of their interior spaces are significant environments through which the public enters

and exits, framing the live performance and setting the tone and so influencing their experience. The two theaters included in *Luna* fieldwork shared certain conventional features and functions, but also displayed individual variations and differences on theatre building conventions.

The *Monument-National* (*Monument-National*, 2005) was a heritage building built in 1893 with an elegant Neo-Renaissance façade. The entire building was painstakingly restored as closely as possible to its original state in 1993. It is owned and managed by the *École nationale de theatre* and houses the French division of their professional theater school, a café, and three performing spaces of which the largest is the 804-seat *Salle Luger-Duvernay* (a mid-range theater in the Montréal context) in which all three Montréal performances of *Luna* took place. As for *Théâtre du Saguenay* (Rideau, 2005), actually owned by and contained in one wing of the CEGEP, it contained a 971-seat performance space called the *Auditorium Dufour* built in 1963 and 1964. I approached the theater by climbing up the steps of a steep hill overlooking the fjord, and through its huge parking lot. About its Modernist architecture I noted “a dirty but flamboyant modernist façade in disrepair, [stylistically] out of synch with the buildings attached to it” (FN: 11-3-01).

Audience members arriving at both venues entered by way of a lobby area where the box office was to be found. Once again, the spaces were made of the elegant marble floors and wood stairways of Neo-Renaissance style. The gray, cement block entrance area of *Théâtre du Saguenay* had ample room for the entire waiting public, and was hung with displays about past and the present performances at the venue. The *Monument-National's* waiting area was comparatively quite small, causing the crowd to spill out either onto the sidewalk or into the adjacent café in which refreshments were on sale, as they waited for the doors to open to the *Salle Duvernay*. Figure 6.1 below proposes a schematic representation of the kinds of spaces, their functions and spatial relationships, found inside the theater buildings in the *Luna* study and discussed in this section:



**Figure 6.1** Organization of spaces inside theater buildings: schematic representation of distinct areas, their personnel and activities.

Montréal theaters commonly have a café that provides a place for audience members to sit and talk before and after the performances, and during intermissions, and in a few cases are managed so that they bring in extra income. The *Monument-National's* café had a contemporary design, and was visible to passer-bys on the street through large windows. It was busy on performance nights, but administrator Bonin<sup>3</sup> explained that its mandate was also to serve the theater school as an additional “cultural space,” diversifying their activities to include exhibitions, receptions, news

conferences, book and CD launches, and other events. On the chilly winter evenings of *Luna* performances, it sheltered and enhanced the comfort and sociability of the occasion for spectators, and as Bonin confirmed, it brought in a little extra income (as was also the case for their theater rentals) for the school. A closed room that was equipped and designed to be a café at the *Théâtre du Saguenay* was tucked away discretely, invisible behind a closed door on the far end of the lobby. It was not operational before the *Luna* performance I attended, but was when general director Louise Beaulieu opened it afterwards to accommodate an audience talk that she facilitated between *O Vertigo* artists and audience members. At this talk, chairs were placed around the room in an intimate semi-circle, but no beverages and refreshments were either served or on sale.

At the appointed time, in both venues, the waiting audience members were called to take their seats in the part of the theater space reserved for spectating, the house (or auditorium). These seats were pre-assigned and chosen by spectators according to availability as they purchased their tickets, and were arranged in parallel rows arranged in a deep curve in the *Auditorium Dufour*. These seats were steeply "raked," meaning built in a sloping upwards fashion like bleachers so that spectators looked forwards and downwards at the dancers. In contrast, spectator's brass and velvet seats were arranged in horizontal straight lines in the *Salle Luger-Duvernay*. In this theater, the stage was built upon a raised platform that was higher than the heads of seated front row spectators, the remaining seats sloping slightly upwards from front to back. There was a single balcony which curved along the side walls. Each seat in every case literally offered a different unique perspective on the performance, the option to choose (at the time of ticket purchase) and so to view the dance up close or far away, from the middle or a side point of view.

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<sup>2</sup> From a phone conversation with *Ecole National de Théâtre's* administrative assistant Anne-Marie Bonin on April 1, 2005.



Also in the house area and traditionally hidden from the audience because placed behind them -- although not the case in the *Auditorium Dufour* where it was in plain view in the middle of audience seating -- a technical booth was located, from which stage effects were controlled. The technicians manipulating sound, lights, and video projection needed to see the stage action for "sight cues" (visible cues for technical changes) from their positions either in this booth or from the backstage wings.

At both venues, as required by the *Luna* choreography, the stage area only became visible to the audience when the huge curtains were opened, this not being one of those contemporary performances in which performers are made visible (as some are) from the moment that spectators enter. The curtains were opened and the stage suddenly illuminated. Goffman (1974) ironically characterized this convention of stagecraft as "opening up rooms so that they have no ceiling and one wall missing" (p. 139).

Surrounding the stage and dancers in both theaters, but invisible to spectators, were various backstage spaces. Their size and shape varied in each venue, with *Auditorium Dufour* as the larger and more massive of the two, but their components were the same. The upper areas above the performers, called "the flies," were reserved for stage lights and pulley systems to raise and lower stage set pieces. More stage lights were positioned at the sides of the stage, and over the heads of spectators, to provide all possible angles. The side offstage wing areas were hung with black curtains that hid from the audience's view backstage goings-on and the dancers as they exited and waited to enter the stage, keeping spectator's attention only on the choreographic work itself. In other words, *Luna* was not one of those contemporary performances that sought to reveal the inner workings of the raw stage space, but one that created the illusion of an imaginary place. The backstage also included dressing rooms with chairs, counters and brightly lit mirrors for the dancers, with sinks and showers for washing up afterwards. Dressing rooms at the *Auditorium Dufour* were in a

corridor space just behind the stage, and in the *Salle Luger-Duvernay* they were tucked farther away from the performing area on an upper floor. Both theatres provided a "green room" area for the dancers to relax in and socialize during their off time, a cozy kitchen with sofa and overstuffed chairs at the *Monument National* but just a large cement block room with folding tables with some snacks for dancers at the *Auditorium Dufour*. The inner mechanics of the performance took place in these various backstage spaces with a flurry of constant activity: the complex and demanding costume changes of *Luna*, dancers' brief offstage moments of recuperation and preparation, technicians' manipulation of lighting, sound and video projections.

The stage area for the *Luna* choreography was divided into spaces, by design, with the floor-to-ceiling scrim (transparent) curtain into two parts, a deep foreground area and a more shallow background corridor. According to which areas were illuminated, these two spaces became alternately or simultaneously visible. In practice, when light fell upon it, the thin curtain became an opaque backdrop, but when the area in back was illuminated it became a filmy transparency revealing what was going on behind. This same curtain also served later in the piece as a projection screen. During the performances of *Luna*, as with all theatrical performances, the stage space was sculpted by a pre-planned lighting design into ever-changing zones of varying shapes, sizes, colors and textures through the use of stage lights and video projections. The dancers moved in and out, appeared and disappeared in these so-called (in the language of stage technicians) "pools and washes of light." (Film clips of these effects can be viewed on the *O Vertigo* CD-ROM, Appendix S.)



### 6.1.2 Time and timing

The temporal aspects of the *Luna* dance event appeared in the data in four distinct guises, each operating on a different event level (Snyder, 1989). Moving once again from macro to micro levels of the dance event, the notion of time arose in terms of *Luna*'s art historical context, the minute scheduling and time management of company activities, and the "real" time of the everyday world versus the "choreographic" time of the theatre. The micro-level of the time factor was the actual timing of the dance movements, which will be described in the chapter on choreographic meaning.

The sequence and duration of dance event activities was detailed in a previous chapter in which the phases of *Luna* were recounted in detail. But to recapitulate the general temporal framework for this discussion of time: the entire enterprise of *Luna* occurred over a period of approximately three and a half years and administrative planning began in spring 2000, and the last performance in Prague took place in late fall 2003.

#### 6.1.2.2 The art historical context of *Luna*

The *Luna* choreography and dance event was created in the fall of 2000, the beginning of what came to be called the New Millennium. In the original 2-page project (Appendix I), penned by choreographer Laurin and her visual art collaborator Morgenthelar for purposes of the company's grant application, there was a clearly articulated orientation towards futuristic research and innovation: "[this projects aims] to develop a new approach to the moving body by applying recent technological and scientific developments" (project proposal, Appendix I). Its creators, artistic peers and other arts specialists consider *Luna* as contemporary (and so not as traditional) in the sense that it seeks to represent aspects of the current-day world and its possible futures.

Dance historian Tembeck (1988a) recounts her view that Québécois dance has had a history distinct from that of the rest of North America because of the hegemony of the Catholic Church whose influence on society was pervasive until the 1950s. She discussed a discriminatory mode of thinking that was fostered by the church in which the dancing was considered a sinful practice (p. 7).

Québec's contemporary dance milieu is rooted in the seminal artist-led cultural revolution towards secularism, the 1948 *Refus Global* in which Québécois poets, singers and writers created the contours which were to characterize the emerging consciousness of a Québécois culture. They were joined by dancers, visual artists and musicians who together created a new kind of modernist art, and signed a socio-cultural manifesto. Choreographer Ginette Laurin is a direct disciple of that Québécois artistic and social movement, and its Automatist credo. When describing choreographers Sullivan and Renaud's 1948 Automatist dances, Febvre (1988) might have been speaking of Laurin when she wrote: "[...] the path towards the final product is carried by a sort of intuition of what must be, and which [the choreographer] knows the sense only afterwards [...]"<sup>ii</sup> (p. 2). And Sullivan (1948) defined the new understanding of dance in her manifesto: "Above all the dance is a reflex, a spontaneous expression of emotions that are vividly felt"<sup>iii</sup> (p. 5)

But the historical era concurrent with the conception of *Luna* (and my ethnography as well) is commonly called "an information age" by sociologists and journalists alike, because of the proliferation of knowledge through computer technology, among other things. These new technologies have also led researchers to new considerations of the human body in the light of cyberspace, themes that were at the core of *Luna's* choreographic concept. These ideas, for instance were, and still are, at the center of attention of a global network that calls itself the International Society of Electronic Arts, whose members I encountered during their 1996 symposium in Montréal.

The *Luna* proposal also advanced ideas about the artistic use of technologies and how the body can be examined more closely through lenses. From his European standpoint, where a neo-conceptualist school of dance was gaining momentum and which put less emphasis on dancing itself, Heun situated Laurin as “a pioneer of the dance form” who makes work which is “still ‘real’ dance,” although adding the remark that she was “not on the forefront of artistic discourse nowadays” (I-WH). But with *Luna*, Laurin had positioned herself within the larger professional dance world as a contemporary choreographer “of her time,” an inventive creator who looks towards the future rather than recreating the past.

#### 6.1.2.2 Scheduling

Time was manifest as well in the minute scheduling of activities at *O Vertigo*. There was “no time to lose”! As a relatively large-scale professional dance company with complex operations, their time needed planning and managing with every minute accounted for and managed by timekeepers.

The temporal parameters of company operations were defined by its directors, according to the cycles and demands of its choreographic creations and consequent tours. As working arts professionals, the time, duration and other conditions of the *O Vertigo* dance company members’ labor in creating and presenting the dance event were agreed upon by contract. Most company activities were organized through the business-like precision of scheduling grids, posted on the kitchen’s bulletin boards. From the largest to the smallest increments of time, these schedules included, among others (a, d and e in Appendix K):

- (a) a calendar of annual dates for company work time and time off
- (b) a communications plan with deadlines for publicity and promotional activities

- (c) the type and duration of dancers' studio work sessions with the choreographer and artistic collaborators
- (d) the timing and sequence of day-to-day activities while on tour
- (e) the "cue sheet," a minute-by-minute breakdown of discrete sections in the choreography with increments in seconds

The company timekeeper on a day-to-day basis, as fieldwork revealed, was rehearsal director (*répétiteur*) Raymond Brisson. Among the many roles he assumed, it was his voice I frequently noted calling out the endings and beginnings of breaks, rehearsals and even dance phrases. His task was to keep everyone and everything on schedule and on time, and to negotiate these timings with the dancers when necessary. His management of company time allowed choreographer Laurin to keep her own attention to time attuned to the micro timing of choreographic actions, phrasing, entrances and exits.

The public showings of *Luna* were produced in professional theaters, their progress minutely scheduled by the venue and dance company technical directors. The *Luna* dance event was not a spontaneous, informal gathering! Audience members were required to arrive in the entrance halls with pre-purchased tickets in hand before the doors to the theatre space were opened. The performances began at 8 PM precisely with no latecomers given access, and all of the choreographic and technical elements of the performance were minutely timed. Even the brief time at the end of the performance allotted for audience socializing, and for the cleaning up and "winding down" of performers and technicians, was strictly managed by building regulations and employee contracts. Every minute of the *Luna* performance and choreography seemed to me to be accounted for and controlled.

### 6.1.2.3 "Real" and "theatrical" time, choreographic timing and off-time

Several distinct experiences of time for participants ran throughout my fieldnotes. As with space, there was a gradual transformation during the in-studio creative processes from the artists' work-a-day attitude towards doing things in a "real" time attitude (e.g. practice a balancing sequence, get the timing right on this lift, take a sip of water, adjust rehearsal clothes) towards the theatrical time of *Luna* (enter into the flow of movement, heightened perception of audience watching, state of "presence" in one's stage persona, etc.). As for the audience, they experienced a sudden shift within seconds, from everyday to choreographic time, at the moment when the curtain rose to reveal the dancers.

Throughout the dance event there were also scheduled and spontaneous off-time moments such as dancers' lunch and work breaks, and periods of the calendar year when dance professionals are not working for the company. In this notion of off-time, I also include the times for audience and artists' recuperation from their concentrated participation, in other words times which allowed them to relax, chat, take a drink or stretch.

Early in the creative process of *Luna* the artists who were creating the choreography worked with focused intensity during daily four-hour studio sessions from 1-5 PM. They took care not to "waste" any of the contractual time agreed on for engaging in creative process with the choreographer. All worked at first in reference to natural everyday time, especially during the period when the dancers were learning and exploring movement sequences. They proceeded with intense efforts to learn and to "naturalize" the difficulties of timing in the new choreography. Gradually the freshly designed paraphernalia of costumes and props, soundscape, lighting and video projections, and the dance floor, arrived in the studio. As these layers of media were added to the movement, the sense of an impending "other



world time" began to crystallize. The final theatrical realm of *Luna* appeared to be set in some imaginary dreamlike time outside of the real world of the performers and spectators. Goffman (1974) pointed to this transformation one of several "transcription practices which render stage interaction systematically different from its real-life model" (p. 144).

The moment of public performance onstage in a theater building contained all of those temporal genres operating at one and the same time: natural, theatrical, off, and rhythmical time frames. Participants experienced them one at a time, shifting their temporal mode from one to another at various times. The extra-ordinary (not everyday) choreographic timing of the *Luna* performance was made manifest onstage. This dance realm was peopled with performers moving in prearranged rhythmical patterns in relationships with the time signatures of a shifting soundscape (see filmed examples on the CD ROM). From my observation point in the backstage wings one night at the *Salle Ludger-Duvernay*, I could also see the technical crew manipulating *Luna's* stage effects, props and costumes. They moved with the concentration and urgency appropriate to what had to be accomplished, but in the natural time attitude of workers undertaking task-like activities. Dancers exiting into the wings backstage took the time to release the intense efforts of performing in theatrical time into the lesser intensity of natural time, if only for a few seconds. Facing the dancers when onstage were the spectators, devoting a couple of hours to live inside the choreographic universe, the theatrical time of *Luna*. When I sat among them I remarked that occasional moments of fatigue or distraction drew their attention away from the stage, as they shifted their time frame back and forth between the "real life clock time" of their evening out to see a dance performance and their immersion in the extra-ordinary theatrical time of the *Luna* performance.



## 6.2 Conclusion

The elements of time and space that formed one of the frameworks for the *Luna* event, emerged from the data in several guises in accordance with different macro-and-micro levels of activity (Snyder, 1989). And so the notion of time was seen as the art historical era in which the dance was made. But it was also considered as the dance company's time management of daily and long-term activities and participants' experiences of real and theatrical time as well as their recuperative off-time moments. And finally time took the guise of timing, in other words the temporal patterns and qualities of the dancing itself. As for space, the widest lens took in the geographic settings, and was then narrowed in to look at the physical surroundings of the *O Vertigo* studios and theatres where *Luna* was performed, moved inside the buildings to describe their organization and architectural spaces, and finally pinpointed the spatial design of the choreography's scenic elements and movements.

Through this detailed account of where and when *Luna* took place, it has been possible to locate certain unique characteristics of this particular event, but also some of those that it has in common with other contemporary dance events. In the following chapters these accounts of where and when *Luna* was situated will give context to participants and researcher's interpretations and evaluations. For instance, that the *Luna* choreography has a contemporary art outlook, takes place in large traditional theaters, tours to many countries and is minutely managed with tight schedules, will be seen as phenomena which impacted on the meanings that the event came to have for its participants.

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Original French texts.

<sup>i</sup> "[...] la course effrénée vers la modernisation du Québec, le geste posé par les signataires du *Refus Global* est d'un symbolisme évident. Il rompt avec le passé, quel qu'il soit. La notion de l'individuation du discours devient de plus en plus prononcée. L'image de l'artiste que l'on véhicule désormais est celle d'un intellectuel contestataire et libérateur." Iro Tembeck

<sup>ii</sup> "[...] le parcours vers le produit final est-il porté par une sorte d'intuition de ce qui doit être, et dont elle connaît le sens a posteriori [...]." Michèle Febvre

<sup>iii</sup> "Avant tout la danse est un réflexe, une expression spontanée d'émotions vivement ressenties." Françoise Sullivan

## PART 3

### MEANINGS OF THE *LUNA* EVENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

## CHAPTER VII

### WHY THE LUNA DANCE EVENT: ITS MEANINGS FOR THE LIVES OF PARTICIPANTS

[...] the perception of something important in either particular works or in the arts generally moves people to talk (and write) about them incessantly. Something that meaningful to us cannot be left just to sit there bathed in pure significance, and so we describe, analyze, compare, judge, classify; we erect theories about creativity, form, perception, social function; we characterize art as a language, a structure, a system, an act, a symbol, a pattern of feeling; we reach for scientific metaphors, spiritual ones, technological ones, political ones; and if all else fails we string dark sayings together and hope someone else will elucidate them for us. (Geertz, 1973, p. 95)

As if bearing witness to Geertz' contention that the arts are meaningful because much attention is given to explaining them, participants (and this researcher) explained in a multitude of ways how their engagement in the *Luna* event carried resonance within the process of living their lives. Each section in this chapter begins with short "meaning profiles," drawn from their own way of speaking about it, and according to their background and perception of their identity and role in the dance event.

Those who articulated their views about these "life meanings" were variously permanent, frequent and short-term inhabitants of *Luna's* contemporary dance world. In the first and third sections, respectively about

artists and dance specialists, I have grouped together *Luna's* vocational artistic participants who gave their lives over to working in the art world. Non-artist personnel are treated in the second section in order to keep them in proximity to the other dance company members. Drawing from data in the interviews and fieldnotes and also from dance writing, these sections discuss seven genres of meaning that full-time engagement in this dance world had given to their lives, and which caused them to continue participating. These genres of meaning are physical, psychological, spiritual, intellectual, socio-cultural, economic, as well as the all-encompassing notion of "holistic" which included several or all of the genres at once.

In the second section concerning the *Luna* event personnel, I examine why they chose to spend their work life in this performing arts milieu rather than any other enterprise. From out of their explanations and my casual conversations with them in the field there emerged a series of both deliberate and unexpected life choices they had made and that led them to working with the *Luna* dance event. These were the participants, neither artistic creators nor spectators, who labored to support the stability and development of the dance company and theatrical venue structures and fortunes, and also who set up and operated the technical systems for the performances.

A fourth section examines briefly several negative cases that emerged from the data, excerpts from the words and writings of participants that questioned the meaning and value of *Luna* in several manners. In the fifth section, all of the ideas previously elaborated in this chapter – from artists, personnel and specialist participants – are pulled together and regrouped as common themes. The same six genres of meaning as in the first section are once again charted and looked at separately, but without the seventh "holistic" category.

Yet another and sixth section identifies and discusses 5 distinct but also interrelated motives along with the underlying views of dance that

brought the 22 audience focus group members to the performance of *Luna* and gave meaning to their dance spectating.

## 7.1 Life meanings for the vocational artistic participants

*Luna's* artistic professionals are those who had dedicated the largest part of their daily lives, and for whom it is their life work's to conceive, create, interpret, teach and learn, evaluate and study the *Luna* choreography and theatrical setting. Discussions about personal life meanings will be fleshed out below by and for *Luna's* choreographer, dancers and rehearsal director, artistic collaborators, expressive specialists and dance students. The dancers will be discussed collectively, even as their individual voices are inscribed in the text, in terms of the kinds of meanings they expressed. Into this artist grouping I have also placed the *O Vertigo* dance workshop students whose role in the event was more that of engaged on-lookers, but who were equally dedicated to living out their lives as dance professionals.

Perreault's proposition (1988) that passion must be considered a primary motivation for professional dancers choice of vocation is certainly reconfirmed below. But it is here that particular varieties of that passion are identified and examined in detail.

### 7.1.1 The choreographer

Although by her own admission not prone to conscious explanations and intellectual analysis, I found choreographer Laurin lucid and articulate during her interviews with Szporer, Barras and myself. She revealed motives for her engagement with dance that were psychosomatic, social and spiritual in nature. Several fragments of conversations with her also gave clues to the



world view that guided her practice, that is a belief in dance as a universal, cultural, and at the same time highly individual, phenomenon.

At the psychosomatic level, Laurin declared having and displaying an enduring attraction and fascination all her life long, with physical exercise and with movement itself. Her first childhood experiences of this kind awakened her love for "physical work", and so she pursued gymnastic and dance training as a matter of personal interest long before imagining a career in the professional dance world. She continuously sought out after-school activities throughout grade school and high school, activities that brought her "close to dance" and to creating physical expression (*expression corporelle* in French). The sheer pleasure she found in movement training was sufficient motivation to continue. In her own words:

[...] in the elementary school I went to, the teacher left the gymnasium open after school and I went in every weekday. That physical education professor came from the circus and he had already done acrobatic acts and mounted performances with young people. So then those were without a doubt the first contacts that I had with the world of the performing arts, in a situation of physical work, and I liked it a lot.<sup>i</sup> (I-GL1)

Although she became the only member of her family to be attracted to the arts, and in her small village there was limited exposure to dance, her father provided her with her first artistic experiences, music concerts and piano lessons, that she felt had somehow "stayed with her, entered [my being]"<sup>ii</sup> as she expressed it (I-GL1).

Laurin's views of her artistry as a social and even spiritual practice were also clearly expressed. Being an artist, she ventured to say in our interviews, entails a form of work that carries responsibility as well as proposing an intangible, abstract way of "doing good" for people in a general

sense. More specifically, Laurin declared an urgent need to “speak” about human and spiritual aspects of the world in her dances. In consequence, she explained that her choreographic intention was not to be provocative, but rather to touch audiences emotionally by way of the large themes (e.g. love) that run across the history of all societies. As she told it, her Catholic girlhood had left traces of spirituality in her mind as well as her heart. She explained that these traces made their appearance in her work through the notion of a soul, a conscience or “call it what you will,” which could be found for instance in the subtle images of angels in many of her dances (I-HB1). (Laurin did in fact use the term “angels” (*ange* in French) in our interview; and I am immediately reminded of Aquin’s photo from *Luna* of Riede behind the giant lens with palms together suggesting prayer and eyes rolled upwards (Appendix S.) She further told me that it was a matter of fate that led her to be a dancer and choreographer, and that the career path that brought her into the dance world was a series of lucky, accidental occurrences. She even mused about her good fortune in having become a dancer: “I had a good star watching over me” (I-GL1). She recounted the intuitive, fateful way that she began creating dances in this manner:

[...] it wasn’t a very precise or rational choice. I didn’t decide to become a choreographer. I wanted to continue my work as a dancer but at the same time open myself to the facet of creation. At the moment when I began to create I didn’t think about becoming a choreographer. It was just another way to open up and try things. I had an attraction, a curiosity for the creative aspect [...]. It’s as if things happen and I say ‘I’ll try that, it’s interesting, I’ll go see [what’s there].’<sup>iii</sup> (I-GL1)

At the core of her social beliefs about artistic practice lay a paradox, perhaps in practice more like a tension, between the universal and the

particular. In her interview with Szporer she declared, "I see dance as being an art form that is very universal" and "I think there's a universal culture of dancers." And in the project proposal (Appendix I), when speaking of revealing the mechanics of duets, Laurin once again revealed her universalist leanings when she wrote: "I have articulated a language in which the human dimension will spring forth with power and insistence<sup>iv</sup>". She explained that through her experiences with dancers in other countries she found that it was very easy to connect with them no matter what their training, and that culture is no barrier to this mutual understanding. For instance, she added, German dancer Riede has proven to "fit well" with the other company dancers because of her personality and not her nationality. Yet in the public conversation with Szporer in English for an American audience at Jacob's Pillow, Laurin also spoke of her desire "to create with my roots" in Québécois culture. She articulated the role of cultural identity in her dancing in this way:

The political and social atmosphere, I could feel it more from my childhood. I'm Catholic. I always liked [the fact that] that we had to keep our identity. As you can hear, I'm French, French Canadian. And even if we don't use words in the dance world, I think it totally influenced a lot that feeling that we had to find our identity. (I-GL/PS)

She explained to me as well that it was important for her that her dancers were given the chance to impose their specific, individual views ("*un certain regard*" as she put it in French), and that she considers this to be an important form of exchange with them that in turn enriches her choreographic work which in turn displays distinctions between the dancers (I-GL2).

And so Laurin seeks to "communicate with everyone," even while "taking from my culture" (I-GL/PS). In other words, Laurin is a protagonist

of a current-day society called postmodern by some, in which many are quickly becoming connected and mobile in a network of "world culture," while seeking to ground their sense of self in their local and cultural identities. Perhaps in an effort to balance the unifying forces of so-called globalization, Laurin's sense of what it means to her to be Québécoise and her connection to the Automatists of the *Refus Global* serve as a crucial counterpoint.

#### 7.1.2 Dancers and rehearsal director

Oh, yes. For me, dance is my life and my life must be in my dance. It's not my job, oh no not at all, it's my life.' (I-MR)

The dancing participants (and some whose role in *Luna* was not to dance but who were also vocational dancers) spoke of a wide array of ways in which their dancing métier had brought meaning to their lives. Like the audience members in focus groups, they discussed the nature and purposes of contemporary dance that lay at the root of these meanings. This section includes those who were interviewed: six *Luna* dancers, the rehearsal director and the company apprentice. The various kinds of life meanings expressed by them will be illustrated in their own words and discussed in seven categories that emerged out of the coding process: physical, psychological, spiritual, intellectual and socio-cultural, economic and the notion of dance as "holistic." Drawing again from the interviews, certain beliefs they expressed will then be recounted and fleshed out, beliefs about the effects of dancing in their lives and the role of dance in society. Links will also be drawn to certain theories about the effects and meaning of contemporary dance practice.

### 7.1.2.1 The meaningful physicality of dance

In praise of the physical sensation of dancing, the dancers described the effects on their bodies, and often minds at one and the same time, in diverse terms such as “a feeling of fullness” (I-KN), “feeling more real in all my body” (I-PL), and “very sensual” (I-AB/RB).

Nearly all offered a story about how they had danced spontaneously during early childhood. They recounted how they had channeled an irrepressible desire for physical motion and expression into participating in childhood activities like amateur dance clubs (Rose and Riede), social dancing (Rose and Demers), gymnastics (Greaves) and ice dancing (Rodrigue). Demers expressed what several others had also articulated about her perception that the urge to move is innate: “I think that as for the desire for movement, I think I’ve always had it”<sup>vi</sup> (I-MD). Rodrigue then recalled a photo of herself at two years old, watching an exercise program on television while mimicking the animator’s movements, and how she began ice dancing as soon as she could walk. As a young child, she would make choreographies in the basement with neighboring children, and when a teenager she put on public performances in the village (I-MR). As a constant performer in children’s dance companies from age three to 12, Riede recalled memories of that period: “[...] it was so intense, so exciting, uhh, very exciting! [...] I think I have always loved dance, I enjoyed it so much” (I-AR). At 18, Barry’s father had already proposed to her a career in dance because “he said this was the thing I would do spontaneously – dancing around the kitchen” (I-AB).

They also described to me the physical (and emotional) intensity of their professional dance training as being both exciting and difficult. Some began taking dance classes later in life for sheer pleasure and enrichment, and many described their pre-professional training as a passionate one, when they had danced “like maniacs” (I-MR) to develop their dance technique and

to see if they were good enough (I-AR) to dance in a professional company. For Barry: "In the beginning, it was a way of exploring, [...] it was very alive and passionate, yet very demanding. I had never been confronted with that type of physicality [...]" (I-AB). The young apprentice Greaves also hinted at how demanding it was, but added that the rewards of the hard training were personal as well as physical (I-IG). And it was Riede who vividly described the relationship she experienced between the pain and pleasure of her arduous training. She explained how it was that through the hard work of dancing she had acquired the now desirable sensation of having an "open body", one that "closed up" when not dancing for an extended period:

I'm not sure if I would say the body suffers... (pause)... because, when I'm not dancing for awhile, I feel my body is...if I'm not dancing for let's say a month, my body starts to relax and all of a sudden I feel no pain anywhere. Which is really excellent, right? Like, nothing hurts! (Riede and Davida laugh together.) But once it exceeds one month I start feeling stiff and not alive anymore. Things start closing up in my body. [...] it takes me a lot of consciousness then to still keep my body open and available for anything that comes in (I-AR).

Is this apparent physical need to dance – a desire for bodily exultation – the sign of a hyperactive metabolism, a genetic predisposition for expressive movement, or a cultivated taste for meaningful motion introduced by a teacher-mentor? The scope of this research project and evidence from the data cannot address these questions which merit further study, which belong to fields of study such as dance medicine, neurobiology, and genetics.



### 7.1.2.2 Psychological reasons for choosing to dance

These dancers made what I felt were sweeping claims for the beneficial psychological effects of dancing. Among them were the generation of emotions like happiness and love, the feeling of freedom to express their "true" inner selves, the sense of "being real" in the social world, and that dancing for them was a way of fulfilling their need to live "fully and intensely," as they put it. In close relationship with these psychological states, they viewed their dance practice alternately as a form of communication (with other dancers, with audience members), a mode of self-expression and discovery about and for themselves (and for others), the thing they love best and felt driven to do. And some of them declared that it was in their role as professional dancer that they had finally found a way for themselves to "fit in" with their social environments.

Many of the dancers spoke of how feelings of joy, happiness, love, and passion brought meaning to their dancing. The maintenance and promotion of happiness within oneself, among co-workers and audience members through their dancing has even given Demers and Rodrigue a sense of social purpose. As Demers explained, she has always been happy, and now sees it as her first responsibility to make her fellow dancers happy as well. It is only then, she explains, that this positive chemistry among them can be presented to the public and felt by audiences (I-MD). In a similar vein, Rodrigue believed that if she is dancing she is happy, and that her happiness in turn helps promote harmony to those around her. She extrapolated that if she wasn't dancing, she would probably become frustrated and begin "not to open her heart" (I-MR). Believing that dance is "very much a celebration of life, and dancing is living it to it's fullest" (I-AR), Riede goes on to characterize her notion of celebration through dance as an expression of "being happy to be in this body and to move and be with others" (I-AR). Rose exclaimed unequivocally that dancing was, for him, "in every way...L-O-V-E, love! You

know, you just want to share yourself!! You just want to share life. This is personal. This is why I am dancing" (I-DR).

For Riede and Lamothe dancing in the contemporary dance world provided a crucial chance to feel free (at last) and to live their lives fully. And this was what made their lives worth living! (I-DR, I-PL) In Riede's case, she recounted how East German society was restrictive and didn't "allow [her] any individuality or any freedom to express [herself]." She credits a dance improvisation workshop in having "for the first time [...] freed [her] inside" and that "something came out of myself [during that workshop] that I never [had known but] was inside somehow." What ensued was an unstoppable process "of feeling freer and more spontaneous and more full and more alive" (I-AR). In a similar fashion, Lamothe had also felt restricted by the demands of mainstream society (albeit capitalist in his case). He saw himself as a misfit who found that while performing dance he could finally "be 'real' [...] live things fully, intensely" [...] and permit himself to express strong emotions." He felt fewer barriers to living these "real things" onstage than in the street, in the everyday world (I-PL). They both spoke as if their psychic survival itself depended on continuing to dance.

For many of the dancers it was also imperative to communicate the self-knowledge and discovery they had gained through dancing to others. As with Demers above, it was a matter of presenting the results of these inner discoveries to audiences and the conviction that spectators "could feel it." Rodrigue spoke of a dance performance as a kind of spiritual rite in which she feels "a general 'opening up' " so that her sense of well-being can be shared by the audience" (I-MR). Riede said that dancing was about "what's inside [her] and how to express that, and how to make it available to other people. And how to give a part of myself, or what I believe life is about." And so it not only gave meaning to her life, but she offered her own life meanings in turn to audiences and fellow dancers. In fact, she thought of dancing as a form of "constant exchange," adding that she had long been "starving for

communication with people, very intense exchange of energies, ideas [...]” (I-AR). Rose expressed his belief that it is the dance and not the dancer that reaches the audience. He stated that from the beginning of his performing experiences “I want to communicate with people,” but puts that in the balance with the imperative to “be true”-- when in the role of the choreographer -- to whatever choreography has to “come out.” To his mind, the dance created will intrinsically communicate to (and please) certain people but not everyone, and will reach wider or more restrained publics according to its own nature (I-DR).

For rehearsal director Brisson, participating in this dance milieu was a way of being in the world. He confided to me that one of his reasons for choosing to work with *O Vertigo* was actually the chance to travel and so to “meet people everywhere in the world [...] which opens enormous horizons for me and constantly stimulates my curiosity [...]. It constantly augments your will to dance, and especially, to communicate.”<sup>vii</sup>

And finally, it was within the dance milieu dancer that Barry found herself at home among peers who “share a certain perspective toward the world that corresponds to how [she perceives] the world, or how [she wants] to live in the world. [...] It’s a way of life, as well, that you grow into. It’s difficult to imagine functioning in another world after a while.” (I-AB/RB.) And so for Barry, her co-workers were like-minded colleagues, and it was through dancing together they had come to share a common way of looking at the world and of living in it. In fact, Barry expressed the belief that she could no longer imagine living anywhere else but in the dance studio and onstage. This is a vivid example of Sparshott’s reflection on dancing as a way of life and thought: “One may reflect here that learning to be a dancer at a professional level must involve adopting as part of one’s very substance a set of values and the language in which those values are articulated [...]” (Sparshott, 1988, p. xxi).

### 7.1.2.3 Dancing as a spiritual practice

Embedded in the biographical profiles of most artists in this study there is a story about how a series of fateful circumstances led them to their artistic vocation. The choice to be an artist was usually characterized as a calling rather than an employment. It was often through the intervention of a mentor (parent, teacher or friend) that they entered the dance world. And for many, the sense that they were destined to be a dancer came to them one day in a "flash of insight". Nguyen called this moment an epiphany (*un declic* in French) (I-KN), Lamothe talked of "a sudden discovery" the first time he danced in a theater piece (I-PL), Rodrigue's fateful turning to dance came to her in a moment of rage against the costs of professional ice dancing (I-MR), Riede fell upon it suddenly when she finally "felt free" during a first improvisation class (I-AR), and so on.

Both Rose and Riede spoke of dance as engaging their spirit as well as bodies and minds (I-DR, I-AR), and perhaps Nguyen was also alluding to spirituality when he described the "feeling of fullness" (*sentiment de plénitude*) that was made manifest when he was dancing (I-KN). But it was Rodrigue who ventured most deeply into describing the spiritual fulfillment she attained when dancing. Through her practices of Tai Chi, Taoism and Chi Kung, she had come to believe in the importance of certain ways of being in the world that she had brought into her dancing: letting go to open a door to what is new; living the present moment by not becoming attached to anything; emptying out to let go of things, allowing it all to flow, finding neutrality and entering into something else. She spoke of Laurin's "open heart" and "inner self" as "beautiful energies" that Laurin exuded and offered to the dancers. When dancing, Rodrigue revealed how she feels "the awakening of life and the forces to which people are subject and by which they are nourished" <sup>viii</sup> (I-MR). She described a performance as a time when she is:

[...] listening to the emotions of the other dancers, exchanging energies with them, sharing together the 'states of their souls' in the form of a choreographic ritual, giving and receiving the interior light which radiates from each of us and then generally opening up to share this well-being with spectators.<sup>ix</sup> (I-MR.)

For ex-ice dancer Rodrigue, making and performing dance was an integral part of her spirituality, that which gives meaning to her life on earth and beyond.

#### 7.1.2.4 Intelligent dancing as a path to understanding

The *O Vertigo* dancers interviewed for this study discussed only rarely the intellectual aspects of their dance practice. But five of them (Rose, Nguyen, Rodrigue, Gould, Weikart) had undertaken university studies in not only dance and but also in the sciences.

It was dancer Weikart in particular who displayed an avid intellectualism by delighting in his search for *Luna's* scientific texts. In a capsule monologue on the company CD ROM (Appendix S) he explained the way in which he interacted with Laurin to help create intellectual underpinnings for *Luna*:

[It was] about different issues in physics. She (Laurin) had spoken to a friend of mine who was an astro-particle physicist. And I was doing stuff, trying to find the texts about particle physics, and this sort of brought us into a long discussion about the phenomenon that in physics when you start going infinitely fast, [...] the infinitely small becomes infinitely large. (Weikart, CD ROM)



I also found two allusions to dance as a way of thinking and coming to understand one's place in the world. Four years after our original interview, Demers told me that she had matured some of her thoughts about how dance for her was a means to express her deepest thoughts about the meaning of her existence. While re-reading the transcription of her interview, she wrote on the copy she sent back to me that she sometimes thinks of dance as a language. She elaborated the linguistic metaphor further by discussing the fact that she had learned contemporary dance before becoming interested in the Haitian dance of her native heritage: "It's like a native language. We have the impression that it is the only one that can express the depth of our thinking. But by learning a second and third language, you realize that certain [other] words or concepts are even more adequate to translate one's reality" \* (I-MD). From another point of view, Barry considered dance training, creating and performing a form of self-knowledge, as she said, "It was a whole discovery of myself as a woman [...]" (I-AB/RB).

#### 7.1.2.5 Socio-cultural motives for dancing

Although self-discovery through dancing was a dominant motif in the explanations of the dancers, they also spoke of the moment of performance as an important time when they communicate (often spoken of as "sharing") with audiences. In this contemporary dance world, dancers are commonly spoken of as the vehicle, the material and the instrument through which the choreographer expresses her vision. Because there is a human being onstage expressing the dance (and not an artwork in a gallery or a book in a library), a meaningful relationship of some kind necessarily arises with those who gather at the theater to watch the dancers. It is in this sense that I think of presentational dance as a social art. Demers went as far as to claim that the



value of a dance itself is that "it exists for people, for those who will be touched by it." <sup>xi</sup> (I-MD)

As discussed in the theory chapter, sociologist Becker (1982) built a case for artistic practice as a particular kind of social work, and "art work" as the outcome of a network of cooperation. A few of the dancers' remarks hinted at this perspective, but from differing points of view. From another angle, Barry described her dance work as a way of life and a set of perspectives that she shares with co-workers, bringing to mind once again Novack's idea of "a community of experience" (1990, p. 15). Riede spoke of her early training in the healing art of dance therapy, recalling Laurin's idea about dance as something that "does good for people." A more sweeping statement by Rose envisioned contemporary dancers as among those who "build culture." Then he exclaimed with a laugh, " You know, culture isn't just railroads!" (I-DR).

As for Lamothe, he spoke of what he saw as the "social barriers" that were obstacles to being "real," by which he meant the possibility of "living things fully and intensely." He said that:

There were always these walls, and me, I didn't want to have a 'steady' job, I didn't fit in that place. I was unhappy [there], that's for sure. Since I was a child, my imagination was elsewhere. I wanted to do something in life that would allow me to do real things. <sup>xii</sup> (I-PL)

For these *O Vertigo* dancers, dancing was a place in society where they fit in, a form of communication and sharing of knowledge with audiences, and a way to "do good" in the world.

#### 7.1.2.6 Not dancing in search of economic security

It was Lamothe and Rose who chose to dance partly as a form of counter-cultural resistance, an alternative to perceived social pressure to get a job strictly to make money, as Lamothe explained above. Dance was the kind of occupation that had finally allowed them to "fit in" somewhere. U.S.-born Rose put it this way:

[...] when I was young, there was a part of me that didn't feel American because I didn't feel like most of what people were thinking and [how they were] driving towards things. And that was 'just get a job and make money.' [And] the force of society says, you know 'you gotta get a house, you gonna get a wife, you gonna have some kids, and to do this, what do you need? You need a job!' [...] Certainly, by choosing dance, I made the choice to not worry about that. (I-DR)

Barry also confirmed that, although her father supported her artistic aspirations, in the community in which she was raised dance was not seen as a serious vocational choice. She said that having grown up in a small town full of scientists, "art was seen as a passion, a hobby, not as a way to make a living" (I-AB/RB).

#### 7.1.2.7 Dancing as holistic phenomenon

Many of the dancers interviewed spoke of being drawn to dance in the first place because it was a practice in which they could exercise their body along with their emotions and even intellect at once and the same time.

Rose told me, for example, that his choice of dropping out of university and deciding to dance had “everything to do with connecting the mind with the body. [...] And for me, certainly, it’s the spirit also.” (I-DR) Riede discussed her need to dance as a physical one, but also as a matter of releasing her emotions so that they “don’t get stuck” (I-AR). When Nguyen proposed his poetic perception of dancing as “a feeling of fullness,” he went on to say that “it was mental as well as physical at one and the same time. It’s quite whole as an art form. It implies body and spirit. That’s what attracted me.”<sup>xiii</sup> (I-KN)

In fact, the neatly delineated life meanings discussed in the previous six categories were rarely in evidence in isolation, but the dancers reported experiencing two or several at one and the same time, as a holistic phenomenon.

### 7.1.3 Artistic collaborators

Costume designer Denis Lavoie and visual designer Axel Morgenthelar articulated differing views on the meanings their artistic practice held in their lives and in the world. For Morgenthelar the significance of exercising his *métier* as a visual designer of light were psychological, intellectual and even socio-political in a certain sense. Conspicuously absent were physical desires and satisfactions, perhaps because Morgenthelar had never been a dancer. As for Lavoie, like many of his Québécois colleagues, he felt there was a fateful destiny at work that had guided him to costume design. But he also recognized the presence of certain psychological, social and—having been a former dancer himself—physical factors in his meaningful relationship with the creative arts.

*Axel Morgenthelar, the visual designer.* As Swiss-born Morgenthelar explained, his choice to join the “small circle” of visual designers for the

performing arts was a careful, calculated set of professional choices he had made in conjunction with a few accidental circumstances. Morgenthelar's career path took him from electronics into visual design after he had recognized the psychological need to "not be lonely, [...] to express our feelings to people," a need fulfilled when we "share our ideas" through the creative arts. He went on to explain that he first tried playing the saxophone and acting, but finally found himself literally and figuratively drawn to light. In working with light he "found within the visual range [he had] developed that [he could] very much define a personal, almost a personal kingdom of expression" (I-AM). This ephemeral and seemingly intangible medium became for him a language with which to express himself, aspire to proficiency, and then hopefully one day through which he might inspire others:

But the main thing is, I look at it as, for me, light became a language. And it is ... for me, it's a voyage towards being more eloquent with that language. And you start up with understanding that alphabet, and you keep going, babbling first words, and eventually, eventually, you might write a novel with light. And, well, some very fortunate people might be the James Joyce of lighting, of light. (I-AM)

Visual design with light for Morgenthelar was a specialized niche that allowed him "fertile ground to be able to liberate creative juices" and also "a sense of freedom." About the medium of dance in particular, he develops ideas through intuition because: "I'm in a physical space, it's all very abstract" (I-AM). Although he believed, as did Howard Becker (1982), that the arts are not really "free" because "there are a lot of conventions and dos and do nots," he claimed it had been easier to have the personal freedom of doing things the way I think that they are right [...] in an environment where you're the only

one who had the expertise" (I-AM). And again in a sense similar to Becker's network of cooperation, Morgenthelar thought of his arts practice as occurring within "a complex landscape of interactions" (I-AM).

Morgenthelar was also well aware of the social, and even political import of his creations. He spoke of light design as a profession with a professional code of conduct, to which one brings the expertise of an artistic sense, and a way of working with other people. He also advanced the social idea that the universal aspect of the performing arts is in fact the audience and the moment of public performance. As did dancer Rodrigue, he ventured as far as to say that putting art onstage in front of audiences is "the reason why we do it." In his scheme of things, the audience was the client. He said that for him "it's the audience, [...] it's in the end effect, it's always...somebody goes from home or from work, into a theater, and pays money, and sits down to see something, and that's what counts most."

In a sly nod to the political implications of his light designs, political in the sense of the power to control it gives him over what is seen, he explained:

I often said that light is not just something to make you see things, it's something that can be extremely political, and just to illustrate that, it can change the meaning of everything. So, I look at it like that, as a personal playground of, if you want, political expression (both he and Dena laugh). (I-AM)

Morgenthelar was one of the few *Luna* participants who acknowledged the politics of aesthetic meaning within his own creative work.

*Denis Lavoie, costume designer.* By this point in the document, Lavoie's kind of story is becoming a familiar one! So many of the Québécois artists above spoke of a belief in an inevitable destiny that brought them into the

dance world, fateful circumstances that had prepared the way, and finally described an epiphany one day that marked their realization that they were meant to dance. In the case of Lavoie, he was born into a family in which his mother was a seamstress and he was raised around sewing machines and cloth, leading to a familiarity and skill for clothing design. He affirmed that things "just happened to him," that he was certainly not a driven careerist. And so it was that one day in a fateful first ballet class in Vancouver, as a young man, it came upon him that he had to continue dancing.

As a dancer who gravitated gradually into costume design for dancers, like most of the other dancers above, his physicality manifested itself in early youth. For Lavoie it was into the physical performance of sports that he channeled his need to move, specifically hockey and competitive swimming. As he revealed, it was during that first dance class that he found a physical outlet in which his latent artistic side could also find expression. Also in the physical sense, but this time of the small motor variety, the *métier* of costume design felt like quite a natural skill for him after his childhood experiences of living with a seamstress: "The first time I sat at a sewing machine, immediately I knew, because visually I had always seen my mother do that, about the dexterity..."<sup>xiv</sup> (I-DL).

Beyond the physical desire to move expressively, like his dancer colleagues at *O Vertigo*, Lavoie found intense psychological satisfaction in having done work in which he "can find within it all that is good in myself" and in which he continued to find interest and pleasure. He felt that a part of him still dances, if only vicariously, through costume design for dancers and that is what keeps him in the dance world. (I-DL)



#### 7.1.4 Dance workshop students

During the focus group with 10 *O Vertigo* dance workshop students (FG4), four expressed views about the meaning of dance in their lives. All were dance professionals, from 23 to their mid-30s), and came from Mexico, English Canada and the United States (Table 5.4.1). Although living and working in dance communities outside of Québec, the views they offered bear resemblance to those of the *O Vertigo* dancers and so suggest commonalities among North American dancers.

Love and freedom were the stated psychological motives and meanings for two of the students. Rubinstein is a mature Mexican dancer, creator and dance theorist. His spontaneous response during the focus group echoes the emotional one voiced by *O Vertigo* dancer Rose. He compared dance to a lover in a turbulent love affair: "[...] either you like it or you love it or you hate it. And I love it (he laughs) and I'm still loving it. So that's why I'm here!" And reminiscent of East German dancer Riede, Mexican dance student Mora described a sense of feeling free through the expressive creativity of contemporary dance, in stark contrast to her earlier ballet studies: "I began with the ballet, so it was very stressful for me. And then I discovered the contemporary dance. I just felt free, and I loved it."

Two other workshop students spoke about the importance of dance as a way for them to communicate, to connect with other people. This form of psychological meaning took on a social sense for them, as it did for Rose and Brisson. Dancer Poole, from the U.S., described her life in the dance world as "an incredibly beautiful experience" that gives her the sense that she is not only connecting with other people, but that she becomes "more than who you are as just one person." For Canadian Bardai, being in the art world is "the only way I know to live my life. She concurs with Poole that working in dance is an "honest way to live" that, as Poole added, "doing a nine-to-five kind of

job thing just, just isn't about." Like Lamothe, it was through their work in contemporary dance that they had found a way to fit into society.

## 7.2 Life meanings for event personnel

Let us now turn to some of the non-dancing participants who didn't participate in the artistic creation of the *Luna* choreography, but rather contributed to the technical and administrative work "behind the scenes" of the dance event. All but the local technical crew members, working at the various venues, professed love and passion for the performing arts. As a group, the personnel's attitudes about the economics of the work they do stand in stark contrast to those of the dancers. Personnel working on the payroll of *O Vertigo* felt that they had finally found the economic stability they needed (and desired) in the art world with this relatively large-scale and successful company. The following ideas from various *Luna* personnel are culled from fragments of fieldnotes, but largely from three interviews with the *O Vertigo* executive and technical directors, and a dance *animateur* who was hired on contract for the *Théâtre du Saguenay* in Chicoutimi.

### 7.2.1 Executive director and his staff

The rewards of Lagacé's dance world vocation were for him both psychological and economic. He had been heading towards a career in architecture when he "was dragged into" the performing arts through his friend Pierre Paul Savoie's invitation to do a set design for his choreographic composition. One day it happened that Savoie's company *PPS Danse* made a popular, marketable performance piece called *Bagne*, and Lagacé knew he "had to move in and start working on the development." And so he considers

that he was drawn into the field of arts management through accidental circumstances.

Later on, accepting the contract as *O Vertigo's* executive director provided his first chance to have economic stability, but he also relished the challenge to develop his skills further and to "touch another level" of the presenter's network. He loved the non-verbal medium of dance and how it evokes feeling for him "on a gut level." Lagacé had a deep admiration for dancers, who he considered as well-disciplined, ultimate athletes. Enthusiasm about his work brings him meaning and makes him a "happy man." In his own words: "[...] I'm very passionate about what I'm doing and I wouldn't do anything differently." (I-BL)

Lagacé told me how he was trying to create more collaboration among artist and staff members at *O Vertigo* to help them understand each other's work and to make it all more meaningful for everyone. He told me "I spoke with Georgine [Vaillant] recently, I mean she's passionate about...she wants to see what we're doing. She doesn't just want to go through shuffling papers and papers, you know. Because then, it makes sense, it's meaningful." (I-BL) Various staff had been interested in the arts since their youth, having some training and experience in various artistic practices before settling on an administrative vocation in artistic companies. For example, *O Vertigo's* receptionist Faucher recounted her story about childhood and her studies at the circus school in Montréal in contortionism and trapeze, skills she later taught at summer camp. She was proud of her background, and so I asked why she had stopped practicing circus skills. She replied that she had started gaining weight when she took birth control pills because of the toll the circus life takes on the body. (FN: 6-7-00)

One thing was evident, the choice of working in the arts was not only an economic one for *O Vertigo* staff members. It was clear that they were committed proponents of the dance company and its work.

### 7.2.2 Technical director and his crew

As *O Vertigo's* technical director, Proulx recounted how it was that he fulfilled, in a holistic fashion, the needs of his body, spirit, and heart. This work also gave him economic stability and even a certain, if intangible, sense of social meaning.

As seen in his biographical profile, Proulx came to choose his present-day métier in a moment of epiphany, as did many of the dancers. It happened all in an instant when his eyes fell upon the course offering of Theatre/Production in a CEGEP catalogue. It was then that his life "all came together," because in the métier of theater production his dexterity and desires seemed to converge, as he put it. He now felt pride in having found purposeful work life in a field for which he was skilled: "It was the period of my life when I almost had a career plan. [...] I decided to bring something to fruition [and] to be the best" <sup>xv</sup>. As he explained, choosing the arts meant also the self-esteem gained from the energy and personal investment it demanded, and the impression that "[...] you are doing something interesting, a little glamorous, that means something to society" <sup>xvi</sup> (I-JP). After his training he moved from job to job in various theatres. He found the long days and small paychecks exhausting, and so was excited and relieved by *O Vertigo's* offer to become their technical director: "The monetary conditions, the working conditions, the structure of the institution, seemed absolutely ... perfect " <sup>xvii</sup> (I-JP). Because his economic satisfaction was assured, he had the chance to have a normal family life and spend time with his daughter.

Proulx is someone who "trips" on all of the performing arts, but admitted to a special relationship with dance. Dance for him was something that spoke more to his instinct and intuition than his intellect (although he did rationalize the meaning of the arts in society). And he unexpectedly revealed to me that, "physically, I have always had a sensibility inside my body. I am someone who is very physical, who has a particular contact with material and

space " <sup>xviii</sup> (I-JP). What he loves about manipulating the technical systems for a dance performance is the concentration it takes but also the physical investment required, if only to move a lever with his index finger. And so he also found that in his work with *O Vertigo* the chance to travel out into the world and meet people was almost like a pleasurable social hobby.

Proulx has been constantly questioning the value of the performing arts in society. Sometimes he concludes that it doesn't offer much in a quantitative way, but rather in the intangible sense of bringing something to "the soul of society" <sup>xix</sup>. He believes that performances are a "tribune for creators" <sup>xx</sup> in which "one creates not only images, but one creates content, one creates something to say" in which "I am touched and made to reflect, and so then I tell myself it is worth something." <sup>xxi</sup> (I-JP)

What about the technicians? Did the work of "running" technical systems for the *Luna* performance, while invisible to the audience, bring meaning to the lives of these technical personnel beyond affording them an income? Two different kinds of crews were observed and considered in the course of this study: (a) the *O Vertigo* technicians who are members of the dance company, and (b) the permanent and often unionized "house" crews of the theaters to which *O Vertigo* toured. Because of extended fieldwork with the dance company, it is the former group of technical crew members who I was able to know best. House technicians in rental-based venues like the *Monument-National* and *Auditorium Dufour* are generally required to work in a very regulated and business-like fashion in accordance with union rules. They rarely get much extended contact with the artists and the performances they mount and run. From my extensive insider knowledge as a dance presenter I know, but also observed during fieldwork, that the technical crews in the venues have little or no personal stake in the performances themselves. There is no time in these situations of one or two night performances, "booking in" at a theater, for the in-house staff or crew to get to know the dance company other than for the space of a day or two. At best, I observed some who took



pride in a job well done, but at worst there was a certain level of boredom with the whole enterprise. For instance, I watched technicians amusing themselves with computer games to pass the time as *Luna* was being set up at Auditorium Dufour. On the other hand, I experienced the passion and enthusiasm on several occasions of *O Vertigo* technical assistant Alain Ouelette and wardrobe mistress Danièle Lecourtois. Both of these dance company crew members were former dancers who had studied in the Dance Department of the *Université du Québec à Montréal*. They spoke to me about feeling fortunate to travel, to be making a living backstage in the dance world, and so to stay connected with the milieu they had come to love. I caught Lecourtois off guard one night, as the dancers prepared to go onstage, amusing everyone by creating theatrical characters with crazy wigs. (FN: 11-3-01) And Ouelette "loves the chance to travel and the excitement of being part of a performance" (FN: 12-15-00). As for the house crew whose limited contact with *O Vertigo* gave them little opportunity to develop a sense of belonging to the dance event, the meaning of their work at the *Luna* performance appeared to be generally limited to the economic opportunity to hold a stable job. For the dance company crew members, working for *Luna* was a passionate stake in the dance world to which they belonged.

### 7.2.3 Dance *animatrice*

Lise Clément was hired as a dance *animatrice*, but had only recently had her first experience of a contemporary dance performance (a film dance of Montréal dancer Margie Gillis). She said it was like "love at first sight [...] a real discovery"<sup>xxiii</sup>. In the work she did for the *Théâtre du Saguenay* in Chicoutimi in view of increasing audience interest and size for the upcoming *Luna* performance, Clément was convinced that a key element was to arouse the spectator's "spirit of discovery" as she put it. In continuity with this kind of psychological motivation, she spoke of the rewards of talking with the



spectators after the performance, when she was left with the impression that they had indeed made an extraordinary discovery while watching *Luna*. She also mused about how it was that destiny drew her to an artistic vocation, and her sense that life “carries us somewhere” (I-LC). Clément expressed the meaning of the arts in society simply: the arts are not only part of her life, but they *are* life... for everyone.

### 7.3 Life meanings for expressive specialists

This group of professional dance world specialists did not dance at the *Luna* dance event, but nevertheless had dedicated their lives either to creating the contexts and conditions in which *Luna* was performed, or to creating interpretations and evaluations through which others could come to understand dance performance’s meanings and value. They proved to be as emotionally passionate about artistic practice as the creative artists. But the specialists described current pleasures that arose more often from intellectual, emotional and kinesthetic, rather than physical engagement with dance, although some of them had been dancers. A single case of spiritual motifs arose in the interviews with presenters, in Boucher’s longing for “the sacred.” And all of these expressive specialists, but some of the free-lance writers, were finding economic stability in their dance world jobs.

#### 7.3.1 Dance presenters

The dance presenters had all arrived at a point in their careers where they were enjoying the economic stability of a steady, well-paid job. The ways in which this performing arts work gave meaning to their lives took different forms: spiritual & intellectual, social, physical and psychological. The four *Luna* dance presenters below offered their thoughts about the particular kinds

of meaning their *métier* holds for them and their views on contemporary dance performance: Martin Wexler, Diane Boucher, Stepfan Schwartz and Walter Heun.

*Martin Wexler, programming director at The Joyce Theater in New York City.* Wexler initially found Modern Dance so "enjoyable and interesting" that he took up a double major in university of dance and economics. The pleasures of dance may have begun as a physical impulse, but later became a vocation and even a social mission for Wexler. His choice after graduation to take up the work of arts administration rather than performance was strictly an economic one. As he put it, "I chose to, uh...stay in the dance world, but hopefully work in a field or an area where jobs were a little more secure, and more long lasting..." (I-MW).

He later put this remark about job security into another perspective by saying that he might, of course, be making a much better salary as a lawyer, but that he drew fulfillment from working in the non-profit arts sector. "We feel," he continued, "that we are providing something that's valuable and worthy to the public. And it is, you know." Then he told me the deeply emotional story of having organized a dance benefit performance for the families of firefighters who died in the bombing of the World Trade Center, as well as the presentation of *Luna* at The Joyce, very soon after the tragedy. (Our interview in his New York City offices took place only six weeks after it happened.) For him, these evenings of dance taking place in dire circumstances proved particularly moving. They "really helped affirm and to see very clearly the power of the arts, the power that the arts have to heal." He spoke of the power of the arts (and of dance in particular) to heal, even as they entertain, by way of uplifting the spirit and soothing the soul. And he also said that he had found great personal satisfaction in facilitating performances and helping to promote artists to "get their work out" to audiences. (I-MW)

*Diane Boucher, associate director of the Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal.* At the core of Boucher's interests was the idea of "the sacred" in the larger sense, not in reference to the idea of God or religion. Boucher never wanted to be an artist, but would rather be close to artists who, she senses, are "very, very close" to that which is sacred. Her studies led her into the interdisciplinary territory of anthropology and art – the art of "others" from cultures unlike her own. Like so many of her Québécois colleagues in this study, Boucher also believed in destiny, and that it was a series of fateful accidents that brought her to work in a museum and finally to run a dance festival. (I-DB)

As well as being drawn to sacred phenomenon, Boucher took great pleasure in intellectual pursuits and especially relishes her conversations with artists about the meaning of art. Through the years she has developed a personal philosophy about art and its function as a way of understanding the world. Among her views: "For me, art is something important. And so, by being in contact with artists, I am more in contact with works of art [and] they are able to give us insight on life, another perception of what is happening in the world" <sup>xiii</sup> (I-DB). It was through her talks with artists that she feels that she has been able to participate in shaping choreographic meaning. During these dialogues, she spoke of how she would:

[...] discover things that are sometimes unknown to the choreographers [themselves]. Especially with young choreographers. They do things, and when you pose questions they realize that 'Oh yes, maybe I did that thing for that reason but didn't see it at the time.' And so, it is in that process you can discover the sense, or give it a sense. <sup>xiv</sup> (I-DB)

Does this mean that Boucher believes the meaning of art lies in the mind of the creator? Would she refute the arguments of those intentional fallacists (see Lavendar, 1997) who contend that artists' ideas about their own works are of no consequence in determining the meaning? To these questions Boucher replied that there is always some kind of message in an artwork, and that each one is made for a reason. (And, she chided, that if there is no message they might as well stay at home!) "Sometimes," she explained, "[the meaning or message] is difficult to find. [...] There are things to discover in the work that may be unknown to the artist. [...] But at the same time I find it interesting to speak with the artist who has his/her point of view" <sup>xxv</sup> (I-DB). Boucher is among those specialists who Shusterman (2002) might call performativist in that she contributes her own creative perceptions and thoughts to the understanding of choreographic works. She has always found it extraordinary to be helping artists discover the meaning of what they are doing, and declared that this is reason enough for her to continue.

*Stepfan Schwarz, Tanzhaus programmer in Düsseldorf, Germany.* Dance is a very physical desire and need for Schwartz. As a form of social rebellion against a technically-minded family with little interest in the arts, Schwartz entered the art world. He already showed a marked preference for physical activities, as is true with the other dancers in this study.

It was initially through his body, training and experiences with the dance form Contact Improvisation that Schwartz entered the dance world, later to become a programmer. He regrets the loss of "body-feeling" he gained from dancing now that he is an administrator, and still tries to find time to take dance classes. "It's another – this is important I think – it's another access to art if you have the experience in the body, out of dance. [...] It's another access which I think is important for my work and which makes my choices more substantial" (I-SS). Schwartz is among those dance

programmers who have danced and so who bring a dancer's perspective and kinesthetic empathy to bear in their work of dance presenting.

*Walter Heun, dance producer with Joint Ventures in Munich, Germany and the Lucern Theater in Lucerne, Switzerland.* Emotional affinities with expressive movement, but especially social motives, instigated and have long guided Heun's work as a dance producer.

He was attracted to dance performance even as a teen, venturing into dance classes as a young adult. And in his email responses, he admitted to having always been able to "feel this strong impulse to express my emotions through movement."

But it was that fateful night when he was "in the right/wrong bar at the right/wrong moment [...] (whichever way you may want to see it)" that what he had to do finally became clear. He began writing down the complaints of Munich dancers about the misery of their funding situation and heeded the social calling. And so he decided that he would be the one to find a way to improve their economic situation.

### 7.3.2 Funding agent and board member

Both the funding agent and the board member who were interviewed had been creative artists in their own right before coming to their current vocations. But the *Luna* event held specific meanings in each of their lives, tempered by their backgrounds and views about art.

*Line Lanthier, dance funding agent for the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.* Lanthier's studies and career in professional dance produced a physical and psychological bond with the dance world that has sustained her love and interest for the field. When she was a dancer, it had been the sheer



pleasure of moving, dancing and exchanging with fellow dancers, and being inside an "imaginary world" that captivated her. Moving from the *métier* of dancing to the administrative work of dance management happened "without taking a formal decision, but rather like following the flow of a river,"<sup>xxvi</sup> she declared with a metaphoric flourish (I-LL).

Although embroiled in the politics of dance funding in her job as dance agent for the province of Québec, Lanthier admits she is not on a social mission but "it is for personal satisfaction that I do it"<sup>xxvii</sup> (I-LL). And it so it was that Lanthier followed the path of destiny to find meaning in her life at first from the bodily pleasures of making dances, and later to continuing to work in the dance milieu she loved through her role in the political and economic development of the Québec dance milieu.

*Claude Gosselin, O Vertigo board member and founding president.* The *O Vertigo* dance company as a legal entity was actually born in the basement of his home. Board member Gosselin's bond with the company as a founding father had spanned its lifetime, and is emotional as well as intellectual, and part of his social mission as an arts organizer.

Arts curator Gosselin was drawn to the organization of cultural activities since he was young. As well as running a cultural arts organization of his own making, the annual event *Les cents jours d'arts contemporains*, he has always worked on multiple levels of the art world contributing to its political, economic and social development. He considered his auxiliary work he does as an *O Vertigo* board member as a form of solidarity with the artistic milieu. He feels that it is a collegial exchange, in which he speaks about Laurin's work to others in his world of the visual arts, and in turn she speaks of his projects to those around her in the dance world.

But apart from his deeply felt social motivation to bring contemporary art to everyone, Gosselin admitted to the emotional and intellectual pleasures he draws from conversations with choreographer Laurin. He put it this way:



[...] I see how it functions in dance and learn more about it, and we give each other ideas sometimes. And [it's also] for my personal satisfaction as well, of course. For the pleasure in knowing how things function, how one mounts a choreography, what are the ideas of choreographers. So, I learn, and it's very pleasant. <sup>xxviii</sup> (I-CG)

As was also true for Boucher, and exemplary of Shusterman's performativist model (2002), Gosselin felt that not only does he learn from these dialogues with artists, but even sometimes is able to contribute ideas to the artistic process.

### 7.3.3. Dance journalists, critics, educators and historians

Four dance writers spoke about the meanings that their engagement in the dance world held for them. All had developed careers in dance writing after having experienced dance training and performing. And all were performativists, in Shusterman's sense (2002), in that they understood their writing practice as literature and a form of creative contribution to an understanding of dances. They saw themselves as art world insiders, not as outsider commentators.

*Philip Szporer, dance critic and reporter, scholar and animateur.*

To Szporer's mind, nothing speaks about contemporary society as vibrantly as contemporary dance. He has given his life to its observation, critique and interpretation. The meaning of dance in his life took the form of intellectual stimulation, but also a quest for the emotional catharsis (an ecstatic state) he finds when engaged an artistic experience that manages to attain the level of depth he finds satisfying. (I-PS)

Szporer did some dancing himself as a younger man and has always sought out active participation in dance beyond the act of writing. For instance, he had relished the invitation of choreographer Irène Stamou to join her company warm-up class, attend her creative session and critique the work-in-progress. Despite his early physical training in dance, it seemed to be especially the intellectual processes of dance inquiry that excited him, leading him towards scholarship, and invitations to serve as resident scholar at a dance festival and speaker for conferences. He loves "developing ideas, finding ways around something," often asking the question "why am I seeing this?" (I-PS). During our in-depth interview, he analyzed and evaluated historical occurrences in Montréal dance during the late 'seventies and early 'eighties, what he felt was a fertile and seminal period.

He also talked about performances that had evoked a sense of discovery: "I remember feeling that I was watching something that I knew I was never going to see again." And for Szporer, "well-edited" art that "works well" can have the power to "mark" someone, bringing them into an ecstatic state that is "almost spiritual." Referring to the Romantic poets he described how this state was manifest in his life:

[...] this ecstatic state is where you...it's this heightened  
...heightened [moment when] you forget where you are. You  
forget who you are for several minutes. [...] Then you leave the  
theater, but it's ruminating in your system. Comes into  
your...filters, into your day. It comes into your sleep patterns. It  
affects you at such a profound level [...]. (I-PS)

Whether communing with dancers as they perform from his vantage point in the audience, or speaking to his radio listeners, Szporer seeks the "difficult place to get to" when all those who are present "really go deeply...to some state, some inner state, psychic state, psychological state" (I-PS).

*Linde Howe-Beck, dance writer and critic.* Howe-Beck's engagement with contemporary dance was an emotional one, a matter of providing an outlet for the personal need for expression. But to her mind, the meaning of the performing arts is also a question of maintaining "social balance."

She had studied ballet and musical theater dancing since childhood, until choosing the career of journalism as a young adult. Then one day she decided to write about dance. "It was a total falling in love [...] I really felt, when I began to write about the dance, that I began to satisfy some need in myself [and] fell in love [with dance] all over again" (I-LH).

Like a long-term loving relationship, Howe-Beck explained that contemporary dance "requires commitment and head work" from the audience. She claimed that this is why some audiences feared the work involved, preferring the ease of simply being entertained. Howe-Beck was so in love with this way of dancing that she couldn't understand why it seemed to appeal to so few people! On the other hand she observed that those who do come regularly to contemporary dance performances "are very faithful." She further explained her personal passion: "Whether it is for myself, for me as a viewer, I can't imagine being without it. As a viewer. The professional in me is the professional in me, but the personal me is an addict." (I-LH)

Underlying this unbridled passion lay her belief that art as a means of expression provides society with "a kind of balance in itself." And then almost as an afterthought, she mused, "It's an expression of the soul I suppose." She found that in the current period in Montréal dance, choreographers were moving beyond the endemic physical risk of an earlier time and so had been able to "find their own voices." With this larger diversity of styles she had found that "there comes a greater insight [and] that people are going deeper into their own... not only their own ways of expressing, but their needs to express." (I-LH)

*Stephanie Brody, chroniqueur de danse.* For Brody, it was the physicality of dance that touches body and psyche that enticed her, but her professional *raison d'être* was public education through dance writing and radio hosting.

Although her work involved doing choreographic analysis and criticism, Brody admitted that for her watching dance is "more about emotions. [...] it's my senses that are looking at something, much more than my brain [...] a much more physical experience than an intellectual experience." Reminiscent of Sklar's kinesthetic empathy (2001), she described herself as a filter for which movement itself is the primary point of view for observation. "Movement moves me," as she said. She expanded this idea in her written comments after reading this text: "I can get excited about a leg turning in its hip socket". This personal feeling level of engagement hasn't diminished for her through the years despite her long-time work as a researcher doing social analysis of the arts with Cultur'Inc., or working as an arts administrator. Her description of deep emotional attachment to contemporary dance and complete surrender to the choreography when watching dance performances, was reminiscent of both Szporer and Howe-Beck:

I do it because it's a passion. [...] I cannot imagine my life without doing this, since I've started. [...] When I sit down, and I see the dance, everything goes away, and I love it and I enjoy it [...] I love being...in the room, I love being in the theater [...] the meaning is so open, and that's what I like about it. And the physical aspect of it, too [...] (I-SB)

Not yet able to "figure out how" to make a living from dance writing, Brody pieces a living wage together from several other kinds of work in the cultural sector. But at the heart of her engagement is the vocation as *chroniqueur de danse*. What she meant is that she preferred to think of herself as more of a

"conduit for the public" than an arts critic who, through her writing, was able to promote the social goal of public education in dance. She expanded her beliefs about dance as a social mission in her later written comments:

I am also proud that I helped, even in a minor way, turn other people on the path to a career in dance. [...] Frédérique Doyon, Marie Lamoreux, Julie Lebel all found meaning and drive, like me, from their close proximity with and total freedom to explore this universe of dance on that [radio] show [at CISM that I hosted.] I think our ability to access the creation process and artists in such a fun and informal manner helped shape our idea that dance is a gift to be shared, not an elitist art form to be preserved in stone. (Brody's written comments on the transcript of the thesis, August 2005)

Written into the text of the *Luna* document as she gave it an official last reading, Brody began to muse about her view of the function of contemporary art in general in a democratic society. She wondered if it might actually serve as "a space for freedom" (*un espace de liberté*) where one "can get lost and reclaim some of [their] lost individuality – even by saying 'I don't like this and this is why' and that's the beauty of it." (I-SB)

*Iro Tembeck, Québec dance critic and historian.* Being a dancer was at the core of Tembeck's life story as she narrated it in our interview, a story in which she recounted strands of meaning that were of a physical, intellectual, psychological and social nature.

Like the other dancers in this study, the physical imperative to move appeared in early youth. Tembeck's urge for physical expression caused her to "jump up and down as a child." Her parents recognized this moving about as

a talent for dance and sent her to dance classes in which she felt "the feeling of freedom" and in which "personal expression or emotion always managed to creep into my dancing" (I-IT).

As a cultural hybrid of Greek origin, but who lived in Egypt and later emmigrated to Canada, Tembeck told me that dance was the one constant in her life. She considered it as her "continuity" and so an important part of her identity. "It is professionally how I present myself, as somebody involved in dance." (I-IT) And she took pride, in the course of our conversation, in her social role as dance pioneer who was a dancer and choreographer, educator, historian and researcher. As she said "I find it is more important to keep writing [...] with different shifts in perceptions, depending on what's happening around, depending on what's happening to yourself as an observer and to...mark your different stages of your perception of things."

As a discipline that had contributed to forming her character and direction in life, Tembeck claimed that dance had served as a source of life-long knowledge for her: "On a professional, human level, it has taught me a lot of things. Discipline, precision, quests. And it continues to teach me things." (I-IT) It was when she began teaching the first history class on Québécois artistic dance that she reconciled her two interests: the written word and the knowledge of dance, the "thinking and the doing." She felt strongly that writing is one way of preserving the elusive history of dance so that the past can be remembered. This devotion to historical writing was nowhere as apparent as in the final moments of her life, when she penned her memoirs (as yet unpublished) in which she reviewed her life in dance in a philosophical and poetic mode.



#### 7.4 When the dance event's meaningfulness is questioned

There were a few comments within the interviews pointing to the perception that every choreography and dance performance is not necessarily as meaningful as another to each and every participant. Dancers Rodrigue and Demers hinted at a social critique of *Lund's* status in the opera house, critic Szporer felt that current-day large-scale dance presentations lacked the inspiration of earlier works, and dance writers Howe-Beck and Tembeck concurred that contemporary dance as yet had meaning for relatively few Québécois.

In a negative turn to those stories of contemporary dance as a beneficial social force, Rodrigue and Demers each confided to me that they sometimes questioned the elitism of dancing to opera house audiences. They are both socially minded women whose self-worth, as I came to understand, depended on helping others. They wondered who might be in the audiences of the large-scale venues where they performed with *O Vertigo*, where high-end ticket prices tended to exclude those without the means to buy them.

In direct response to my question of why she dances, Rodrigue told me that she sometimes wonders how "useful" her dancing might be to society in general. She spoke of her desire to help those who live in poverty, and her admiration for how people dance on every occasion in the poorer countries where she had traveled:

[...] sometimes one wonders why we dance, what does it bring to the people, to society? [...] Because I feel preoccupied by the world. I have traveled a lot in Third World countries. I tell myself that there are so many things to be done to help people. [...] I find it sad [that we think of dancing as a luxury] because in poor countries they really dance! I went to Brazil, to Argentina, to Venezuela, to Mexico, and do they ever dance! That's why at

festive occasions, I always dance with people, I go to tango, I find that necessary. <sup>xxix</sup> (I-MR)

And so alongside dancing with *O Vertigo* and going to tango, Rodrigue had also taken up a teaching practice called Gyrotonic© as a way of helping people to feel better in their bodies.

Reminiscent of aesthetic theories that consider art as a non-utilitarian phenomenon, Demers mused that the kind of contemporary dance she was doing didn't seem to be really of practical use to others: "Deciding to make sense through dance, I think it is a decision to make something that is not useful and to accept that. [Dance] is not useful for society like being a doctor or social worker [...] [But] I think we need that which is not useful" <sup>xxx</sup>. Thinking further about the audience, she exclaimed that everyone had a right to like contemporary art, and deplored that it seemed to be reserved only for people with certain interests and so inclined because of their studies (I-MD). In her later annotations of the interview, she had matured yet another social viewpoint on dance. Demers made reference to an elitism she found embedded in the attitudes of contemporary dancers themselves who see their dance form as the point of reference for all others dances in the world. As a result of these reflections, Demers began spending part of her summer break in her native Haiti, volunteer teaching for the dance community there. In her own words:

In a condescending way, we [contemporary dancers] regard the dances of the world with amusement, saying 'how pretty it is'...it's so folksy. At the same time we consider contemporary dance as THE dance, forgetting that it also has a long alliance to cultural references that might in turn seem folkloric to my friend Tahirow! I don't know if mixing is a solution, but my preoccupations are now turning to the fact that I want my dance to

find a public not only in Montréal, but in Ouagadougou.<sup>xxx</sup> (I-MD)

I came across Demers one evening at a dance performance on December 10, 2004, and she had in fact fulfilled her desire, having just returned from a voyage to Ouagadougou. She had just performed one of her solo choreographies in a new dance festival there and the audience, she felt, responded with enthusiasm.

Dance writer Szporer felt that many of the contemporary choreographies he had been attending lately were losing "the spark of what they need to do" as he explained it. He wondered if it might not be the result of artists being driven by funding systems and co-producers to create large, elaborate productions. He spoke of a trend to bring contemporary dance to ever-larger performance halls and audiences, and though this "gives an opportunity for a larger number of people [to see the work]" he feels that it "takes away from the art form." He recalled his earlier work as a dancer, a time when he was "developing ideas, finding ways around something, and the joy of doing that." And Szporer lamented the lack of dances that "mark people" in which they were "people doing movements I had not seen before [...], a sort of ecstatic moment, feeling I was watching something that I knew I was never going to see again." (I-PS)

As a self-professed "dance addict", dance writer Howe-Beck pondered the low social status of dance performance, especially of the contemporary variety. She had been on a fast-track career as a journalist when she chose dance criticism as her *métier* and became consequently marginalized among her journalist colleagues for whom dance held "zero status." She cited "a fear that they might not be entertained" and "having to do some head work" as a reason for the relatively youthful, "small, slow-growing audiences" for contemporary dance in Montréal. Why, she sighed, does this kind of dance performance appeal to so few people? (I-LH) Howe-Beck's colleague

Tembeck, in a similar vein, concurred that dance had found little place in public discourse, in the daily lives of people. And so she had "always been wanting to make people, or to help make people, perceive dance as an integral part of society." Like Howe-Beck she deplored the lack of consciousness of dance of any kind in Montréal society:

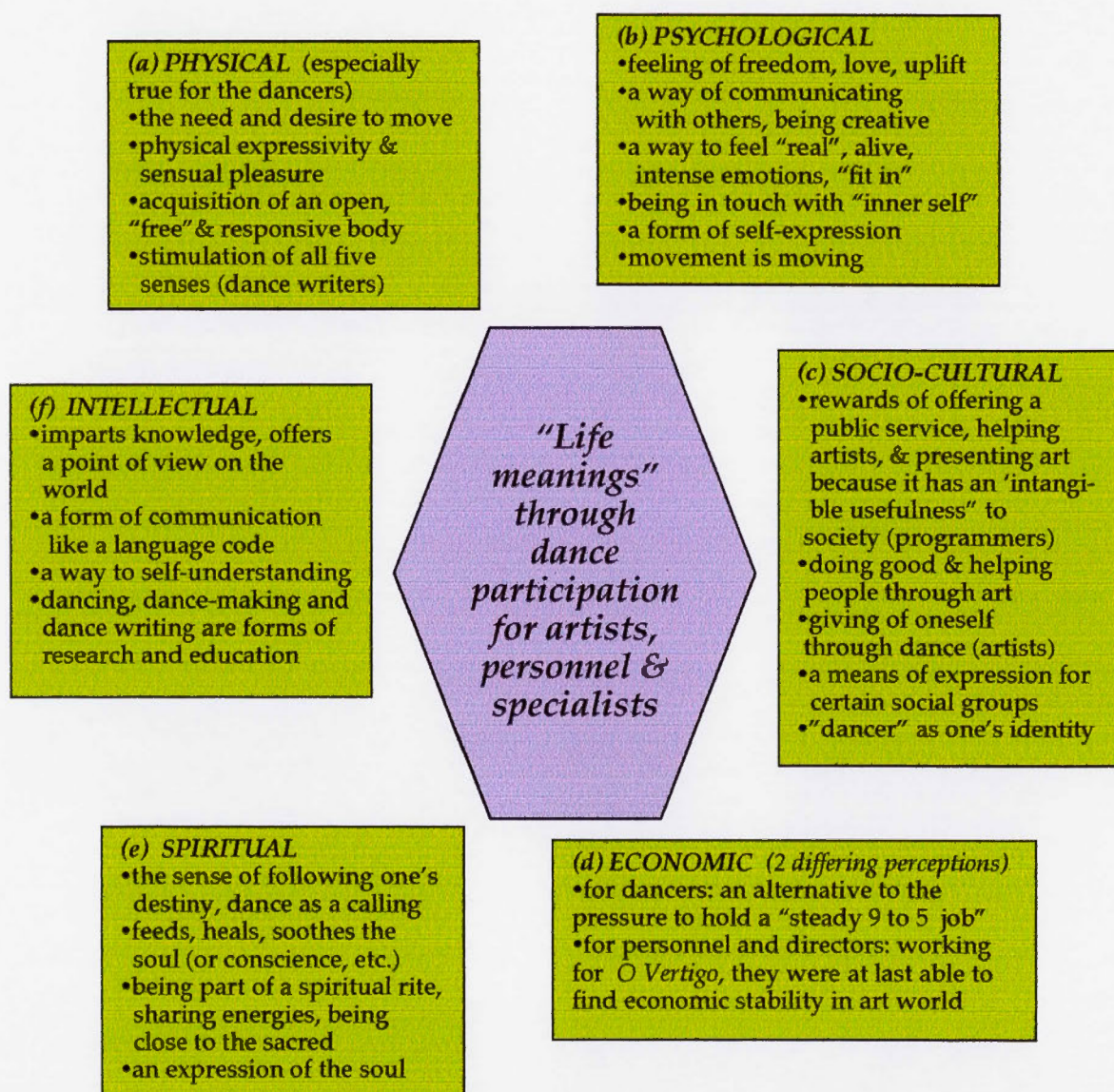
Just make a little analysis of how often dance is seen in our dailies. Only before a show, or after a show. That upsets me a lot. It's as though dance doesn't exist, dance, dance, [...] I'm saying that dance does not exist in print for everyman. But music does. And theater does. And, you see where in the paper it arrives. (In) *Le Devoir*, it's the last page. The last page! (I-IT)

From their perspectives as specialists who spend the greater part of their lives observing and analyzing contemporary dance, Howe-Beck and Tembeck wondered why it was that so few members of Montréal society-at-large chose to participate, and so find meaning, in this expressive art form they have found so engaging.

#### 7.5 A synthesis of life meanings for artists, personnel and specialists

How to make sense of the many varieties of life meanings expressed by these artistic, personnel and specialist participants? I feel it is pertinent once more to remember that the undertaking of *Luna* was guided by artworld conventions but carried no single prescribed set of meanings for all participants.





**Figure 7.1** Genres of life meanings that artists, personnel and specialists found through participation in the dance world and the *Luna* dance event. (The order of elements is random and not a hierarchy.)

I have clustered evidence about the life meanings expressed in this chapter into six genres which are charted schematically in Figure 7.1.

They were rarely present in isolation of each other but were expressed in clusters of two or more for each participant. These meanings were also sometimes correlated as cause-and-effect, as with for instance a participant who found that physical sensation evoked an emotion, or another who felt that exchanging intellectual ideas with artists brought her closer to that which was sacred.

The in-depth interviews yielded a rich and varied set of life meanings. This is likely due not only to the depth of conversation, but also to the fact that almost all of the participants interviewed – artists, personnel and specialists -- lived their lives inside the contemporary dance (or art) world from which they drew both livelihood and “vocational identity”. The dance event’s influence on their lives was more pervasive than “having an evening out at the dance” as was the case for most spectators.

Various theories about art and (personal and social) life emerged among the artists, personnel, specialists and theorists of the *Luna* event. Through this study (and especially the interviews) I have discovered that these notions were fashioned out of a complex matrix of factors such as: the resources available in one’s immediate environment, guidance of a mentor, views and beliefs about the arts inherited through ethnic and/or national identity, educational background, opportunities encountered, parents’ attitudes and the home life that was created, social life with friends and co-workers, and so on.

The nature of each of the six genres of life meaning is briefly looked at below, with reference to relevant dance theories and beliefs. The genres have been identified throughout the above texts, but here they are synthesized and some of their implications are discussed for the ensemble of vocational event participants.



### 7.5.1 Physical

An expressive body in motion (and in stillness) is the trademark of dance, it's distinction as an art form among others. Physical life meanings were most apparent among those who had danced or had some kind of body training.

Whether or not there is a genetic predisposition for certain people to move their bodies expressively (and so to become dancers if the circumstances are right) is a question yet to be answered by geneticists and perhaps neurobiologists. But what emerges clearly is that all participants in this study who had trained and performed in dance showed signs of an irrepressible physicality as a toddler. Their stories bear witness to a desire and need for a kind of physical activity they often described as exhilarating and sensual. Many spoke about their physical training as an intense experience, and I observed during fieldwork how they consistently pushed their own boundaries of strength, skill and stamina. Several dancers spoke of becoming accustomed to feeling their bodies "open" and responsive through dancing, and that the contemporary dancer's way of moving procured for them a sense of living fully and of freedom, especially to "be oneself." Some described the artistic dancing they do as a form of body-to-body communication. Dance programmer and former Contact Improvisor Schwartz called it the "necessity of body-feeling" (I-SS) which he gained when moving his own body in dance classes, as if a necessary enrichment of his understanding of the dance that he brings to his audiences.

As for those *Luna* participants who had never studied or performed dance, but had chosen the performing arts milieu as their workplace, most mentioned a special affinity they had found for the physicality of dance. This affinity took many forms, from the visual designer's fascination with imagery of moving bodies to the technical director's special kinesthetic sensitivities to the manipulation of lighting instruments.

The physical imperative to move vigorously and expressively and the benefits it reaps, have been cited by dance theorist Laban throughout his writings (e.g. 1988). And ethnomusicologist Blacking (1980) proposed that "performances of dance [...] can [...] help to bring coherence to the sensuous life, the 'intelligence of feeling' which in turn can affect motivation, commitment, and decision-making in other spheres of life" p. (65). But it was aesthetics philosopher Shusterman (1999) who has been defining a body-centered method for understanding the arts, and to whom I now turn for theoretical grounding on the physical satisfactions and somatic meanings of dance. He initially defined this new branch of aesthetics as "the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory aesthetic appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning" (p. 302). One of the dimensions of somaeasthetics would be then to "describe the basic nature of our bodily perceptions and practices and their function in our knowledge and construction of reality" (p. 304). I am thinking here of how the *O Vertigo* dancers spoke about their body's openness, fullness and responsiveness, and the way in which these perceptions reflected a set of values by which they had chosen to live their lives and apprehend the world.

### 7.5.2 Psychological

Many of the dancers (and this is true for myself as well) declared that it was when they discovered contemporary dance they finally found the place where they belonged in the art world, and even in society. As a member of the dance world they could "feel real" as Rose (I-DR) and Lamothe (I-PL) put it, and could express their emotions with the necessary unbridled intensity. The practice of sports had satisfied their need to move vigorously early on in their youth, but it wasn't until they came across what they felt was the relatively less competitive, but challenging, ethos of contemporary dance

creation and improvisation that they felt at home with themselves. With dancing, they had also found a particular way of communicating with others that they could understand. Most declared that their dance training had brought them emotional growth and that by dancing they came into touch with their "inner selves". The kind of dancing they did with Laurin, especially during the creative process period of *Luna*, called upon not only their physical abilities, but also their own creative ideas and impulses. Also among those participants who were *Luna*'s dancers, and also others who danced or had danced, were several who spoke of contemporary dancing as a way of being what they termed as the "freedom to be themselves."

Many of the artistic and specialist participants who had chosen dance as their vocation, spoke in euphoric terms when describing their relationship with dance. They declared that working in the dance world had brought them feelings of happiness, ecstasy, and even love. Several likened their first experiences with contemporary dance to that of falling instantly in love and consequently making a life-long commitment. The darker side of this emotional (and physical) engagement, at least for the professional dancers, was the pain and frustration I observed during fieldwork stemming from dance injuries, both chronic and occasional.

These psychological motivations are also reminiscent of theories from dance anthropology about how dance functions as a form of non-verbal communication (Hanna, 1980), or as Blacking (1980) wrote, "the notion that ideas and feelings can be expressed collectively through dance and music before they are articulated in speech" (p. 65). And dance historian Jeschke's account of German Expressionist art in the '20s (1989) seems particularly kin to the emotional testimony and outlook of *Luna* participants in this section: "[...] art [for Expressionists] is no longer what is generally considered beautiful, but directly expresses what moves artists emotionally, what appears necessary, 'true' to them" (p. 19).

### 7.5.3 Socio-cultural

Some of the artistic participants in *Luna* expressed their belief that contemporary dance has beneficial social purposes, but also that it serves as a form of cultural and social identity.

Peter Brinson (1980) asked "Can dance itself, using the powers of imagery, directly stimulate political and social action?" (p. 208). Substitute electronic age for industrial society in 2005 at the time of this writing. Although a few expressed some doubts, all *Luna* participants articulated the belief that the dancing they do "does good" in some way: helps people (in a general sense), has the power to heal, has value and worth as an important part of social life, and that it has an intangible but certain usefulness to society. In their view, dancing was thought of as a "cultural resource" or, as dancer Rose put it an act of "building culture" (I-DR). Those who managed the various aspects of the dance event were inclined to think of their work as a public service, because helping artists and bringing art to audiences. In this vein of social service, dance writer Brody described herself as a public dance educator, and historian Tembeck perceived her role as that of a self-described dance pioneer bringing the culture of dance to Québec society-at-large. Some of the dancers spoke of their performances as a time when they shared themselves with others. They shared their knowledge, self-discoveries and even "energies" (as they put it) with the spectators and among themselves even as they danced.

Some *Luna* participants affirmed that being a dancer or working in the performing arts served as part of their social identity. I am particularly fond of Demers' metaphor of dancing as a "meticulous métier like that of a jeweler or a watchmaker" (I-MD) in the sense of honing a precise and useful skill, and Barry's description of dance as "a shared way of life" (I-AB/RB) and so a way to participate in a community of dancers. Their chosen vocation meant more to them than just a form of employment, they shared together a mission

to create and bring dance to audiences. Rehearsal director Brisson and technical assistant Ouelette loved touring as a way of life, bringing them the chance to travel, meet new people and so expand to their views (I-AB/RB and FN: 12-15-00). Like Novack's Contact Improvisors, they all felt part of a community of experience (Novack, 1995), an international network of contemporary dance event participants linked by common experiences and understanding but without geographic boundaries. Choreographer Laurin even advanced her view that there were universal characteristics in contemporary choreography, allowing her work to tour and be understood throughout the world.

At the same time, Laurin introduced the idea that her choreography always bears the marks of her Québécois culture (I-GL1). As discussed earlier, these markers include her affiliation to the Automatists of the *Refus Global*, a personal sense of the soul gleaned from her Catholic upbringing, and the politics of her need to articulate and so affirm her identity as a Québécoise through dance. The expression of cultural or national characteristics by way of dance also came to light at various times throughout the study. Examples are Riede's discovery of dance improvisation as the pathway to freedom from the internalized restrictions of her East German past (I-AR), Demers' desire to bring her dance knowledge home to her Haitian homeland (I-MD), and the effects of Tembeck's multiple national identities on her critical views of Québec dance history (I-IT). For the dancers, not only were these identities somehow inscribed in the dance and into the dancing itself, but the socio-political circumstances in which they were raised and studied dance had contributed to their beliefs about the place of dance in society. Not only does the *nouvelle danse* event of *Luna* bear the markings of being made in Québec by a Québécoise choreographer, but inscribed into the dance even were the traces of the various cultural origins of its participants.



#### 7.5.4 Economic

A surprising divergence of views arose about the economic meanings of working in and for the *Luna* dance event. The dancers generally considered their engagement in the dance world as a welcome alternative to the daily grind of a regular nine-to-five job where they felt that they couldn't "fit in." In contrast, directors and personnel said that their job with the *O Vertigo* dance company had given them a chance at last to have a stable employment situation in the art world. This dichotomy of views is an echo of the two metaphors that arose in discussions about the company: that it was at once a large-scale corporation and a family-like group. A synthesis below of the differing attitudes of dancers and personnel, gleaned from earlier texts, sheds light on how it was that the contemporary dance world and a successful company like *O Vertigo*, could function both as a productive and viable cultural enterprise and as a refuge for the artists from whom it draws its vision.

Dancers Rose and Lamothe were quite clear that their choice to become dancers was not one of seeking economic stability and comfort. They decided to dance because it was in this kind of work that they had found a way of life alternative to that of society-at-large and the pressure they had felt to get a "real" job (I-DR and I-PL). Rodrigue left the field of competitive ice dancing for contemporary dance as an economic choice because it simply cost less to train and work in the performing arts (I-MR). Dancers Nguyen and Barry left behind career choices in the sciences with jobs that might have provided them with more financial stability, for the uncertain income of a life in dance (I-KN and I-AB). Although *O Vertigo* provided relatively high salaries, Québécois dancers as a group are reported to have the lowest of incomes among their artistic peers in other fields, and reported an average income of 20,200\$ a year in comparison to the general average of 28,708\$ (Baillargeon, 2004, p. C8 ). Dance writers belong in this category of low-



income earners as well, with the exception of university professors like Tembeck, and spoke of piecing together a living wage with difficulty by working at many jobs to support their vocation (I-SB, I-PS, I-LH).

From their point of view, the directors, managers, staff and technicians perceived their contracts with *O Vertigo* to be a welcome possibility of a steady, stable income with good working conditions in one of Québec's largest and best-funded dance companies (I-BL, I-JP and FN: 12-15-00). This was also true for those working in the large-scale venues to which *O Vertigo* went on tour with *Luna*. I recall programming director Wexler's calculated choice to stay in the field of the dance he so loved, but at the same time to seek a way of earning a better income than that afforded dancers (I-MW). So he left behind the choice of dancing for that of administrating dance. And for at least dance specialist Tembeck, a career as a tenured professor had provided financial stability and a respected social status that few dance professionals had attained.

Linking the divide was one certainty: none of the (non-audience) participants working in the *Luna* dance event considered their métier as the ladder to great economic fortune. But all of them hoped to attain at least some kind of basic financial stability.

#### 7.5.5 Spiritual

Spiritual beliefs of several kinds proved to be a subtle but pervasive kind of meaning for *Luna* artists, personnel and specialists (although lacking in the conversations with the focus group spectators below).

All Québécois participants, and some of the others, told me that they believed the force of destiny was at work in bringing them to become dancers – suggesting the intervention of “a higher power”. They recounted how it was that a fateful series of events had brought them into the dance world. Dancing for them was “a calling”.

Fragments of several conversations also made reference to spiritual beliefs: Szporer always sought "a state of ecstasy" at performances (I-PS), Howe-Beck mused that dance was probably an expression of the soul (I-LH), Boucher felt that artists were close to the sacred (I-DB), and Riede intimated that dancing "was what her soul wanted" (I-AR). Rose and Nguyen thought of dance as a holistic practice, a way to connect body and soul. In the wake of the 9/11 World Trade Center catastrophe in New York City, *Luna* programmer Wexler told me how his audiences seemed to find in the *Luna* performances way to "soothe of their spirit" (I-MW). And choreographer Laurin spoke of enduring traces of her strict Catholic girlhood in her belief in a soul or conscience, imprinting images of angels in her choreography (I-HB1).

It was dancer Rodrigue for whom the practice of contemporary dance had become a spiritual one under the influence certain Eastern mystical beliefs she was practicing. She characterized live dance performances as "rites of energies, souls and light." In this "frame of soul," she thought of the meaning of dance as if having been given a gift to promote harmony in the world (I-MR).

Although this modest collection of remarks about spiritual meanings doesn't point to the conclusion that the *Luna* event was generally recognized by artists, audiences and specialists as a kind of spiritual rite, but neither was it devoid of spiritual meanings for its participants.

#### 7.5.6 Intellectual.

At the core of the intellectual meanings expressed by *Luna* participants, particularly Francophones (and including audience members), were the metaphors of contemporary dance choreography as a kind of language, code, and as a form of research.

Some participants claimed this non-verbal "dance language" as a form of communication in which a point of view about the world was exposed. They also put it this way: that dance has a message to give, something to say. As technical director Proulx said, " [...] the performance remains a tribune for creators. One doesn't just create images, one creates content, one creates something to say"<sup>xxiii</sup> (I-JP). Since by definition contemporary artists are discovering and creating innovative choreographic material, the creative artists in *Luna* talked about their practice as "choreographic research" in the sense of seeking new knowledge in the field of dance. This status of choreographic creation as research in the academic sense is actually enshrined in university dance departments like that in which Tembeck worked, at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*. This very research project is part of a doctoral level program that recognizes the academic viability of graduate studies in art-making processes.

Thinking about dance as a literary text has so deeply impregnated the French language at the present time that the notion of choreographic style is frequently called *écriture chorégraphique* among Francophones, literally meaning "choreographic writing" (a term that has not impregnated the English-speaking dance world). And Francophones call the innovative contemporary choreographer an *auteur* (translating literally as author), under the influence of the French genre *cinéma d'auteur*. An entire academic theory of language and meaning, but not subscribed to by all dance theorists, is behind a way of seeing artistic phenomena in terms of language-like code: semiotics.

It was among the dance writers, programmers and board member (also an art curator) that conversations with artists were described as one of the great intellectual pleasures of being in the dance world. Boucher and Gosselin felt that these intimate and wide-ranging discussions were a way in which they had enhanced their own knowledge of dance and also contributed to the artists' own understanding of what they are doing in their artwork.

These conversations took on the form of more formal interviews for dance writers and radio hosts Brody and Szporer. Both of them were passionate about having long and in-depth talks with artists for their written articles and radio broadcasts, even if only a small portion of the material was made public (I-SB and I-PS).

## 7.6 Life meanings for spectators

The section about the audience comes last and takes a somewhat different form than those above for several reasons. Since they numbered literally in the thousands, it was only possible in the end (as seen in the methodology chapter) to sample the ideas of a small group of spectators in the context of post-performance focus groups. In this context, where they each were only able to contribute a few ideas, there was less time for in-depth development as in the interviews but it did mean that a lively exchange of ideas occurred among them. And unlike the vocational event participants portrayed in the previous sections, their engagement with the Luna event was of a short duration, in general about two hours or so, a relatively short period in which to observe them.

During the focus group sessions, the 22 spectators spoke about various motives that drew them to attend *Luna* in the first place (and also to dance performances in general). They also recounted the kinds of meaning that dance spectating had given to their lives. Also revealed during the discussions were particular views and beliefs about dance as an artistic phenomenon that they carried with them as they entered the theatre. Some of them explained the way in which their ideas on dance were gleaned throughout their lifetimes from sources such as discussions with friends and relatives, educators, television programs, previous exposure to the arts, reading about dance, taking dance classes and talking with dancers. With

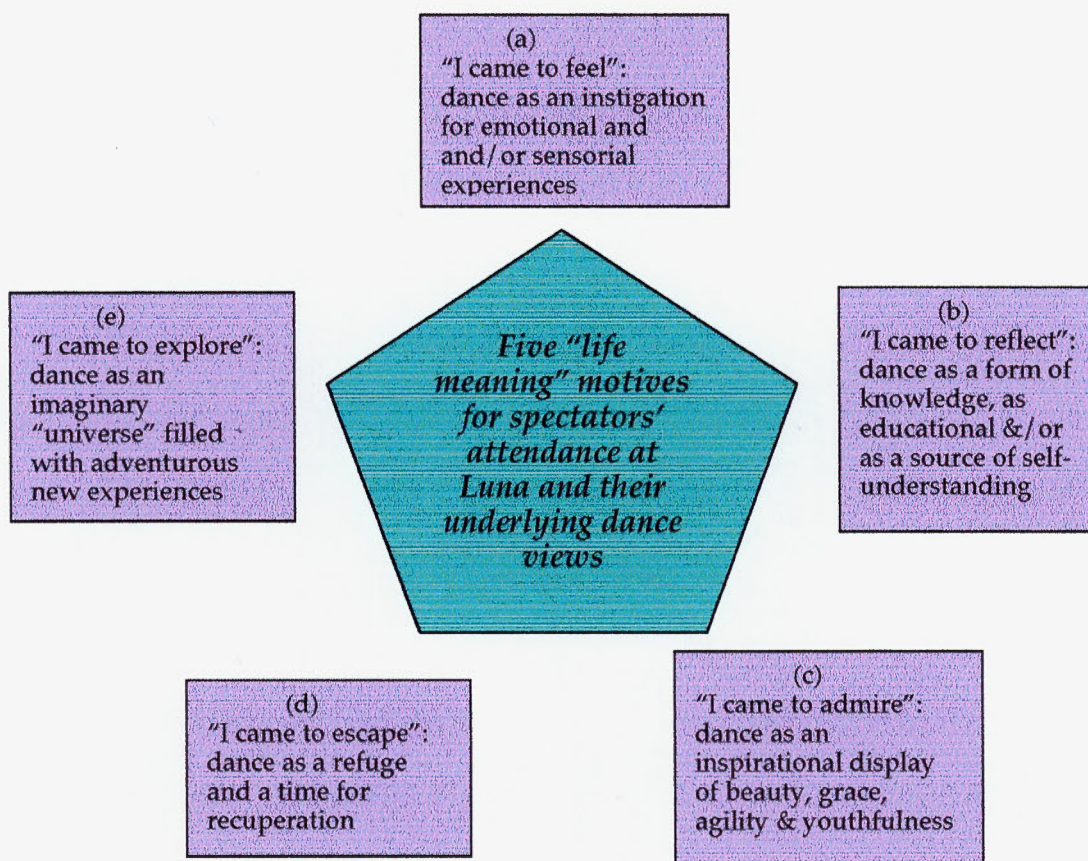
their interest in the nature of human experience, phenomenologists call this predisposition a "horizon of expectations" (Fraleigh, 1999).

Because this study is a portrait of only one dance event in a specific, bounded time and place, it is important to recall that the practice of dance spectating is not static. As Cloutier and Provonost (1992) discovered in the course of their Québec arts audience study (1992), and the *Luna* focus group members confirmed, various points of view -- knowledge, attitudes, opinions -- about professional dance are acquired within a socio-cultural context throughout one's lifetime and remain in continuous flux. For example, bearing witness to this ever-changing perspective, *Luna* spectator Antonyk offered this account of how his perspective on contemporary dance performances had shifted over time from one of simple pleasure with the dancing to an interest in understanding the content communicated by the moving bodies:

I found in the beginning it was just pure enjoyment of watching movement, body movement. But I found as time went on ... that communication through the body became more interesting to me than communication through words. (FG1: Antonyk)

Synthesized schematically in Figure 7.2 below, I have distinguished five genres of motivation for dance-going, which can also be seen as life meanings, which arose from the focus group data. These meanings were oftentimes expressed as having been experienced in combinations of two or more.





**Figure 7.2** Life meanings that motivated the attendance of 22 audience members at *Luna*. (The order of elements is random, and not a hierarchy.)

Each category is aligned with a corresponding underlying view about the purpose that this kind of dancing and dance experience held for them. Each of these five motivations and dance views is further elaborated below in the context of this particular performance of *Luna*, and in reference to Québécois culture and Occidental arts practices.

#### 7.6.1 I came to feel

Six of the 22 focus group members expressed a belief that dance performances were meant to display and evoke heightened emotions and



sensations, a clear correspondence with the intentions of dancers like Rose (I-DR) and Lamothe (I-PL). Spectator Jerry Antonyk, for instance, spoke emphatically about his emotional orientation:

I guess basically I watch to feel emotions. If I feel emotional with the piece I am watching then I feel like I am gaining something from the piece. [I asked a friend] Did you get any feeling, emotion? Did it take your breath away sometimes? (Antonyk, FG3)

From three decades of immersion in the Québec dance world as teacher and arts presenter, I expected and found a significant number of spectators who "feel" the dances they are watching. Occidental art historians have named this aesthetic orientation Expressionism, an artistic school of thought based on the belief that emotions are necessarily the driving force behind artistic creation and interpretation. As Tembeck's historical thesis (1994) on Québec's contemporary dance movement brings into evidence, many of the key Québécois choreographers (including Ginette Laurin) who began their careers in the 'eighties, have indeed subscribed to this emotional approach of choreographic creation.

It is possible to distinguish the motive and view of sensation from that of emotion, the former being allied to a physical, kinesthetic perception and the latter to a psychological phenomenon. On the subject of sensorial motivation and apprehension, here are two experiences of this kind that were described by focus groups members:

... I guess I'm more interested in feeling how the dance flows, the images and the kinesthetic reactions I have in my own body when seeing the dance. ... So it's really more a physical

appreciation of the dance than a search of meaning in the dance. (Hobden, FG1)

But this [the message of the dance] is not important. It's the beauty of the gestures. The beauty one looks at. Looking at those people (dancing) there. Me, I would have liked...even though I don't know how to dance...but I almost had the urge to go and dance with them. <sup>xxxiii</sup> (Logueux, FG2)

Both spectators consider this physical body-to-body appreciation of dancers preferable to an intellectual search for a particular meaning or message.

Are the spectators who spoke about sensation during the focus groups reacting in kind to a sensorially saturated aesthetic (under the influence of some sense oriented dance or movement training)? Or are they simply sensually sensitive (kinesthetically-oriented) dance watchers? Or both? As I have frequently observed in situ and witnessed in my fieldnotes, close observation of these sensorial spectators often reveals them actually producing empathetic micro-movements in their seats as they watch, a physical reaction to the dancer's movements. It is ironic that for these sensual audience members that the current-day decorum of most contemporary dance performances requires nearly complete stillness and silence from the audience. As a kinesthetic viewer myself, I often myself producing small sympathetic micro-movements during the performance, and I am left wondering if I am disturbing less physically emphatic spectators sitting nearby.

It is commonly stated by dance theorists that it is the presence of expressively moving bodies that distinguishes dance from other art forms. It was during the Expressionist period that proponents of this dance movement began to analyze dance in terms of "dynamics", a move towards the "felt

qualities" of the movements. This notion took a particular postmodern turn with the dance form Contact Improvisation, a way of dancing based largely on attentiveness to physical forces and inner sensations at play within one's own body through a point of contact with another dancer (Novak, 1990 & 1997). Attention to bodily sensation is currently a widespread component of dance training, and also embedded at the core of a field of body techniques called somatics.

#### 7.6.2 I came to reflect

In the *Luna* focus group conversations no fewer than 16 of the 22 speakers revealed some level of intellectual reflection and interpretation. Ironically, I found that even those who declared themselves to be against interpretation of a self-consciously mental kind did so articulately! For these intellectually inclined spectators the dance performance embodied in some way ideas about the world, metaphors, a language or code, and/or evoked various kinds of self-reflection and self-identification. Among the many instances, here are two varieties:

As a human being, I recognize myself in that [dancing] even if I don't dance with my body ... it's as if it was an extension of me.<sup>xxiv</sup> (Desnoyers, FG2)

First of all, I think everything we see in our daily lives we interpret ... everything has meaning, that's basic, a kind of fundamental thing about being a human being. And I think we are quite able to turn gestures into metaphors, just kind of like a language. (Kevin, FG2)

Like Desnoyers, some saw aspects of their own lives and identities reflected in the dancing, or in their thought in the aftermath, as if watching *Luna* had been a journey of self-discovery. Discussed in more detail in the next section, these rationalizing audience members spent at least part of their spectating time in the throes of analytic mental processes.

It is not surprising to find so much intellectual apprehension of the dance performance in light of the relatively high educational level of *Luna* focus group members. As well as a tendency towards intellectualism, they articulated the notion that art is composed of, and that at least one of its purposes is, to generate ideas. Whether consciously or not, they have likely benefited from the lore of Western aesthetic Enlightenment philosophy and its proposal that art is meant to be apprehended rationally as a source of knowledge about the world and path to self-understanding, whether it is seen as an aesthetic object requiring distanced contemplation or an engaged social practice. And one of the pivotal occidental artistic movements in the last century, Conceptual Art, based its credo entirely on the viability of idea-based art practices.

### 7.6.3 I came to admire

Seven focus group spectators expressed emphatic admiration for the artistry, skillfulness and beauties of the dance, dancers and dancing. For these admiring focus group members, watching the *Luna* performance was a matter of, in their own words: a moment of pure enjoyment (Antonyk and Dura, FG1), seeing the body moving so freely (Simard, FG3), admiration for hard-working agile young bodies (J. Hubert, FG3), a chance to be inspired by the beauty of the gestures (Logueux, FG2; Dura, FG1). This attitude of admiration was clearly articulated by the youngest focus group spectator:

I'm 16 and it's true that this is the first time I've come to see a dance performance. [...] And why I chose to come tonight to see a performance is that I have always been fascinated by dance. I find there is something magnificent, a kind of grace in the movements, and I find that quite beautiful. <sup>xxxv</sup> (A. Simard, FG3)

As evidenced by Simard above, and all 5 admiring focus group members, admiration serves to procure pleasurable aesthetic experiences for its proponents, who have come in anticipation of this effect. Foster (1995) points out in her theory of choreographic paradigms that this attitude renders the dance performance a celebratory occasion (pp. 42-43). And so for these spectators, an admirable performance might be thought of as a kind of celebration of the human body's capabilities and ideal proportions. To put it yet another way, the *Luna* performance offered them a display of exemplary physical skills, beauty, gracefulness, emotions, movements and bodies. Cultural theorist Carole Becker (2002) proposes that this particular image of artists as admirable beings is a matter of living vicariously: "[...] At times we have been known to revere artists, to think of them as unique or even superior beings who live deeply inside their creative selves, while the rest of us often forfeit these more ephemeral aspects of ourselves for jobs that we may find less fulfilling [...]" (p. 12).

Admiration of these characteristics (beauty, skill, artistry) can be said to be widely shared values among Montréalers because often revered as well in the performances of other kinds of popular Québécois public performances such as competitive sport meets and popular singing concerts. Dancers, for instance, like elite athletes are seen by the public at large to be ideal models of health, harmony and fitness, serving to push the limits of human physical capacities. (It is ironic that dancers are particularly prone to severe health problems and physical injuries, even deformations because of the demands of



the profession.) Spectator Jeannine Hubert remarks that she doesn't even try to understand what is happening. Instead, she prefers giving her attention to the agility of the dancing bodies on stage, suggesting to my mind as well that admiration may provide a point of meaningful entry for those spectators who either can't or prefer not to "make sense" of the choreographic content.

An ever-changing notion of beauty and pleasurable aesthetic experience has long been associated with the very idea of art itself, notions whose hegemony is in dispute in particular since the advent of postmodern art. And the quest for beauty in dance apparently persists among some, if not all, of the *Luna* spectators. Shusterman (2002) would reconcile the opposing views of those who would admire the superficial beauty and those who would seek deeper meanings for art. He points out that attention to the immediacy of surface appearances, as he calls the love of beauty, is allied etymologically to the idea of aesthetics. He explains that it is typically "associated with the pleasure of sensuous form" which stresses the "impassioned immediacy of experience" (p. 1). All the while arguing for deeper interpretations of content and context, he also advocates the very necessity and interrelatedness of this superficial aesthetic apprehension "as it cultivates, the rich and productive power of sensory appearance" (p. 27). Spectator Ella Dura bears witness to this productive power:

Well, it's so meaningful, any kind of beauty in the world! I just go because I want to enjoy and I think that's what gives meaning to the world. (Dura, FG1)

#### 7.6.4 I came to "escape"

Several Francophone focus groups members spoke of dance-going as a form of escape, an imperfect but near translation of the French word *evasion*



that they used. These three excerpts indicate differing and particular forms it took:

And so, each time that I come to see dance performances, it's to change my routine, to air out my spirit and to fill up with energy. The dancers literally empty themselves and fill you up with energy even as you watch them.<sup>xxxvi</sup> (Villeneuve, FG3)

I would say that it's a little like going to theatre. Maybe to forget, to flee, to escape, to escape from one's self, to experience new sensations.<sup>xxxvii</sup> (Tremblay, FG3)

You might say that what it brings me is a good time to relax. It's the visuals, the expression, the freedom.<sup>xxxviii</sup> (Hubert, FG3)

Contemporary dance performance as what form of escape? In the three citations above it is implied that the demands and routine of everyday life were countered during a dance performances. These dance occasions provided Villeneuve with change, and for spiritual and energetic renewal; for Tremblay, it was an opportunity to "flee and forget one's self" through the experience of new sensations; while Hubert considered dance spectating as a time in her life to enjoy recuperative relaxation.

The idea that going out to an artistic performance is a form of leisure-time activity and escape from everyday life is culturally pervasive in Montréal. In the English language, the concept of entertainment (and also amusement) is a close corollary to *évasion*, the French term used in the focus groups, referring to those pleasure-filled activities that take place outside of the everyday world of family responsibilities and work life. These functions for art also emerged from a spectator's point of view in both the massive cross-Canadian (*Cultur'Inc. et Décima Research*, 1992) and a small-scale

Québécois study (Cloutier and Pronovost, 1996). In the former, the researchers found that more than 2/3 of Canadians who go to performances (of all artistic genres) do so above all to be entertained and to relax (p. 44). As well, among those who had recently attended a performance and would like to do so more often, 67% were entirely or somewhat in agreement with the idea that the arts provide a welcome change from everyday life (p. 57). As for the smaller, local research project with 20 performing arts spectators in Québec, the desire for escape and relaxation (*evasion* and *détente* in French) was pervasive. These were the only motives mentioned by all respondents in seeking contact with seven out of the eight art forms including dance but with opera as the exception (p. 68).

The belief that the arts essentially serve society as a leisure-time activity, with which to counter the pressures and dreariness of work and everyday life, is also at the core of a lively debate among those Occidental aesthetic specialists who have concerned themselves with the definition and authenticity of art. It has created a split between those who, on the one side, identify innovative and contemporary art-making practices (the "avant-garde") with revolutionary political and educational goals. And at the other side of the debate, so it goes, are those cultural studies' scholars who advocate for artworks that are "popular" and so less elitist because they have more widespread appeal (and economic viability). Reception theorist Bennett (1997) explains these aesthetic positions as a series of competing political visions within modern theatre practice: escapism/illusionism vs. realism, bourgeois vs. more widely relevant values, sedate vs. actively engaged spectators (as co-creators), and text-centered vs. artist/audience meanings. In this view, as Bennett explains it, escapism is an undesirable bourgeois pastime involving sedentary spectatorship and mediation by expert texts (p. 6).

It is not the aim of this study to advocate for one or the other of these positions. The reality of the *Luna* spectators in this study proved to be a

complex phenomenon revealing the coexistence, within the same group of spectators, of multiple and overlapping points of view about the purpose of dance performances.

#### 7.6.5 I came to explore

For several spectators in the focus groups, the illuminated stage space with its imaginative choreographic goings on became an evocative self-contained "world" or "universe" (a metaphor commonly used by the spectators and other participants) that existed for the time of the performance. Two focus group excerpts described variations on this perspective:

What I experienced (from watching a dance performance) is related to living in a "world". As if the dancers allow me to enter a world into which I don't have access in everyday life. By gaining access to this world, I can live things, I can feel things.<sup>xxxix</sup> (Diop, FG3)

I would say that it's a little like going to theater...going to abandon oneself to the world of images perhaps. Especially with modern dance which doesn't take us into a narrative – or sometimes it does, but in any case – it allows our imagination to run free. To escape reality maybe, or to let us get inside some fantastic images, dreams that we don't have in reality, that are in front of us. Things that we haven't been able to imagine.<sup>xl</sup> (Tremblay, FG3)

For Diop, it was the dancers who give him entry into the world they create onstage, a world which enables him to feel and live things absent in his

life outside of the theatre. And Tremblay, himself a dancer, went to dance with the intention of abandoning himself to what he hopes will be fantastic non-realistic images, and so escaping the "real world" for a certain time. The way they described their experiences suggested to my mind a psychological voyage into a dreamlike time and space that an artist has invented, kin perhaps to the non-realistic literary genres of fantasy or science fiction.

The spectators who viewed the performance as an adventure in to a fictional land with its own imagined behavioral codes, expressed the advantages of this experience as being able to live and feel things not possible otherwise. Others explained it as the sharing of someone else's vision and so an expansion of one's own. They assumed the outlook of explorers venturing into fantastic choreographic landscapes hoping to discover new dance terrains. This view of dance performance also brings to mind the Western illusionist theater tradition calling for an audience's "willing suspension of disbelief" as it is commonly called by theater professionals.

At first thought this attitude bears resemblance to that of escape (in the previous section), because both are characterized by a flight from everyday life. In contrast to the adventurous audience members who "came to immerse", the escapees came looking for respite and a comfortable, familiar experience. On the other hand, those focus group spectators who came to *Luna* for an immersion into an imaginative world, sought the rousing excitement of exploration, even that which might be destabilizing and uncomfortable.

With *Luna*, choreographer Laurin has in fact created a non-narrative and symbolic "universe" through invented movements, light, costumes, spoken text, electronic images and props. Non-realist and abstract contemporary choreographic performances like *Luna* have historical roots in the modernist art movement, initiated at the end of the 19th century. I am thinking here of the imperative to bring art-making away from naturalistic reproductions of real life into the realm of imaginary, intuitive impressions of

the real world (for creators and audiences alike) in artistic movements such as Impressionism, Surrealism, Dadaism, and Automatism.

It bears mentioning that dance-like behavior like that in the *Luna* performance, rarely resembles and only occasionally refers to, the way people actually move and express themselves in the “real” world. In the early 20th century, Occidental Modern Dancers set out to distill everyday movement and so to create symbolic movement metaphors, which in time became codified through diverse schools of dance technique, fashioned by the visions of their creators (Graham, Nikolais, Cunningham, Limon, Horst, and so on). And the postmodern dance movement that followed it no longer based dance-making in the aesthetics of training techniques, but called for the continual reinvention and innovation of choreographic material and concepts each time a dance was to be made.

And so, the focus group spectators who were delighted by the chance to immerse in the imaginary choreographic world of *Luna*, whether knowingly or not, were the kinds of active and curious spectators envisioned by modernist and postmodernist choreographers as they created their fantastic and poetic compositions.

#### 7.6.6 Cross-genres of these modes

It is important to note that these five modes of apprehension, were not necessarily exclusive of one another. The vast majority actually described experiencing a combination of modes, either in the form of an attention that shifted from one to another, or as a fluid mixture of several that occurred simultaneously. For instance, Diop experienced many modes at one and the same time:

[I came for] the experience, to see the bodies in motion! It's something that I didn't know very much about and so I had the urge to know, to feel, to see.<sup>xli</sup> (Diop, FG1)

And Villeneuve recounts a process by which one mode of apprehension led him successively to another:

[...] there is an emotional flow that occurs and which is lived during the performance and which fills one with energy, as I explained earlier. It's really this flow of emotions being mixed inside that causes reflection. A performance brings me to reflect on myself, on what I am living.<sup>xlii</sup> (Villeneuve, FG1)

As this sample of 22 spectators suggests and illustrates, there is currently no single predominant set of ideas or principles that constitutes a common understanding for all audience participants about contemporary professional dance in Montreal. Diverse schools of thought about art, artists and art practices co-habit the landscape of the current-day pluralist postmodern art world in Montréal.

## 7.7 Conclusion

To different degrees of intensity and despite occasional doubts and displeasures, evidence from these testimonials confirms that participating in the *Luna* event was indeed a meaningful part of the repertory of activities in the lives of participants. In the stories above this meaning took on the form of various kinds of pleasures and satisfactions, tempered by their role in the event and the dance views they carried in with them as they entered the dance studio, office and theater.



It is now clear that although how participants behaved was governed by established conventions and even contracts, there was no single way in which the event functioned to give meaning to their actions. But even if this small subculture of dance event aficionados did not share a common motive for their engagement, I was able to isolate various sites of consensus and particularly among the members of each participant group. The most striking example that comes to mind is the way in which the dancers and the choreographer reported the physical delights and powerful drive to move expressively that had long been a primal force in their lives, leading them finally to chose dance as their profession.

Returning to theoretical models about the meaning of dance events discussed in the theory chapter (Hanna, 1979; Kaeppler, 1985; Lange, 1975; Schechner, 1977; Spencer, 1985) it can be seen that this kind of contemporary dance event was a cathartic venting of tension for some, while for some it served as a spiritual rite, or again as a form of communication like a specially coded language for yet others. But as I also discovered while in the field with *Luna*, participation brought its proponents very personal rewards such as a sense of doing good in society, an experience of the extra-ordinary, or a way to enhance their understanding of the world. And so it might be said that the *Luna* dance event served many functions at once, in various ways for different participants.

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The original French texts.

<sup>i</sup> "[...] à l'école primaire où j'allais, le professeur laissait le gymnase ouvert après l'école et j'y allais toutes les fins de journée. Ce professeur d'éducation physique venait du cirque, il avait déjà fait des numéros d'acrobatie et montait des spectacles avec les jeunes. Alors ce sont sans doute les premiers contacts que j'ai eus avec le monde du spectacle, dans une situation de travail physique, et j'aimais beaucoup. [...]" Ginette Laurin

<sup>ii</sup> "[...] c'est resté là, c'est rentré." Ginette Laurin

<sup>iii</sup> "[...] ce n'était pas un choix très précis, pas rationnel. Je n'ai pas décidé devenir chorégraphe. J'ai voulu poursuivre mon travail d'interprète mais en même temps, m'ouvrir à la facette de la création. Je ne pensais pas, au moment où je commençais à créer, que je deviendrais chorégraphe. C'était une autre façon de m'ouvrir, d'essayer. J'avais une attirance, une curiosité pour l'aspect de la création [...]. C'est comme si les choses arrivent et je me dis, 'je vais essayer, c'est intéressant, je vais voir'." Ginette Laurin

<sup>iv</sup> "[...] j'articulais un langage où la dimension humaine ressortait avec force et insistance." Ginette Laurin

<sup>v</sup> "Ah oui, pour moi, la danse c'est ma vie et il faut que ma vie soit dans ma danse. C'est pas ma job, oh non pas du tout, c'est ma vie." Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>vi</sup> "Le goût de bouger, ça, je l'ai toujours eu." Mélanie Demers

<sup>vii</sup> "[...] j'ai commencé à rencontrer les gens un peu partout dans le monde [...] ça t'ouvre des horizons énormes, ça pique ta curiosité, ça augmente constamment ton vouloir de danser et surtout de communiquer." Raymond Brisson

<sup>viii</sup> "C'est beaucoup l'éveil de la vie et les forces auxquelles on est soumis et nourri. Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>ix</sup> "Être à l'écoute de l'émotion des autres danseurs, échanger nos énergies, partager nos états d'âme sous forme de rituel chorégraphique, donner et recevoir la lumière intérieure qui irradie de chacun de nous, et s'ouvrir généralement pour partager ce bien-être avec les spectateurs. Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>x</sup> "C'est comme une langue maternelle. On a l'impression que c'est la seule qui puisse exprimer le fond de notre pensée mais en apprenant une deuxième ou même une troisième langue, on se rend compte que certains mots ou concepts sont encore plus adéquats pour traduire une réalité." Mélanie Demers

<sup>xi</sup> "[...] elle existe pour les gens...qui vont être rejoints par ça." Mélanie Demers

<sup>xii</sup> "Il y a toujours des murs et moi, je ne voulais pas faire une "job steady," je ne rentrais pas là-dedans. J'étais malheureux, c'est sûr. Depuis que j'étais enfant mon imaginaire était ailleurs. Alors, je voulais faire quelque chose

dans la vie qui puisse me permettre de faire des choses vraies." Patrick Lamothe

<sup>xiii</sup> "[...] c'est mental et c'est physique en même temps. C'est très entier comme forme d'art. Ça implique tout le corps et l'esprit. C'était ça qui m'avait attirée." Kha Nguyen

<sup>xiv</sup> "La première fois que j'étais sur une machine à coudre, tout de suite j'ai su, parce que visuellement j'ai toujours vu ma mère faire ça, la dextérité..." Denis Lavoie

<sup>xv</sup> "C'est la période de ma vie où j'ai eu presque un plan de carrière. [...] j'ai décidé de mener quelque chose à terme [et] d'être le meilleur." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xvi</sup> "[...] tu fais quelque chose d'intéressant, d'un peu 'glamour', qui apporte quelque chose à la société." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xvii</sup> "Les conditions monétaires, les conditions de travail, de structure de l'entreprise, m'apparaissaient absolument...c'était parfait." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xviii</sup> "Physiquement, j'ai toujours pensé que j'avais une sensibilité à l'intérieur de mon corps. Je suis quelqu'un de très physique, qui a un contact particulier avec la matière [et] avec l'espace." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xix</sup> "L'âme d'une société" Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xx</sup> "tribune pour les créateurs" Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xxi</sup> "on ne crée pas juste des images, on crée du contenu, on crée quelque chose à dire" et "il arrive à me toucher et à me faire réfléchir, alors là je me dis que ça vaut la peine." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xxii</sup> "Ça a été comme un coup de foudre [...] comme une découverte." Lise Clément

<sup>xxiii</sup> "Pour moi, l'art est quelque chose d'important. Donc, en étant en contact avec des artistes, on est plus en contact avec des oeuvres d'art [et] ça nous éclaire sur la vie; et ça nous donne un autre aperçu de ce qui se passe dans le monde." Diane Boucher

<sup>xxiv</sup> "[...] découvre des choses qui parfois sont même inconnues du chorégraphe. Surtout chez les jeunes chorégraphes. Ils font des choses, ou ils essaient des choses, et quand tu leur poses des questions, ils se rendent compte que: 'Ha, bien oui, peut-être que j'ai fait ça pour ça mais sur le coup, je ne m'en suis pas rendu compte.' Alors, il y a toute cette démarche-là, découvrir des sens ou donner des sens."

<sup>xxv</sup> "Des fois, c'est peut-être un peu plus difficile à trouver. [...] On peut découvrir beaucoup de choses dans l'œuvre que l'artiste ne sait pas. [...] Mais en même temps, je trouve ça intéressant de parler à l'artiste qui a son point de vue." Diane Boucher

<sup>xxvi</sup> "[...] sans prendre de décision formelle, mais plutôt comme on suit le courant d'une rivière." Line Lanthier

<sup>xxvii</sup> "[...] c'est par satisfaction personnelle qu'on le fait." Line Lanthier

<sup>xxviii</sup> "[...] je vois comment ça fonctionne en danse et j'apprends de ce côté-là et on se donne des idées aussi des fois. Et pour ma satisfaction personnelle aussi,

bien entendu. Pour mon plaisir de savoir comment ça fonctionne, comment on monte une chorégraphie, quelles sont les idées des chorégraphes. Donc, j'apprends, c'est agréable." Claude Gosselin

<sup>xxix</sup> "[...] des fois on se dit pourquoi on danse, qu'est-ce que ça apporte aux gens, à la société? [...] Parce que je me sens préoccupée par le monde. J'ai voyagé beaucoup dans les pays du tiers-monde. Je me dis qu'il y a tellement de choses à faire pour aider les gens. [...] C'est triste je trouve [que nous pensons à la danse comme un luxe], parce que dans les pays pauvres, on danse! Je suis allée au Brésil, en Argentine, au Venezuela, au Mexique et on danse! C'est pour ça que dans les fêtes, je danse toujours avec les gens, je vais au Tango, je trouve ça nécessaire." Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>xxx</sup> "Décider de faire du sens avec la danse, je pense c'est décider de faire quelque chose qui est inutile, [et] de l'accepter. Ce n'est pas utile pour la société, comme être médecin ou comme faire un travail de relation d'aide [...] je pense qu'on a besoin de l'inutile!" Mélanie Demers

<sup>xxxi</sup> "De façon condescendante, on regarde les danses du monde avec un air amusé en disant 'c'est joli...c'est folklorique.' Et du même coup on considère la danse contemporaine comme LA danse en oubliant qu'elle possède tout un alliage de références culturelles qui pourraient paraître folkloriques pour mon ami Tahirow! Je ne sais pas si le métissage est une solution, mais mes préoccupations tournent maintenant autour du fait que j'aimerais que ma danse puisse trouver un public autant à Montréal qu'à Ougadougou."

Mélanie Demers

<sup>xxxi</sup> "[...] le spectacle demeure une tribune pour les créateurs, on ne crée pas juste des images, on crée du contenu, on crée quelque chose à dire." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xxxiii</sup> "Mais ce [le message de la danse] n'était pas important, c'était la beauté des gestes. La beauté à regarder. Regardez ces gens-là. Moi, j'aurais envie...remarquez que je ne sais pas danser...mais on aurait presque envie d'aller danser avec eux." Ginette Logueux

<sup>xxxiv</sup> "En tant qu'humain je me reconnais là-dedans même si je ne danse pas avec mon corps [...] c'est comme si c'était une extension de moi qui est devant moi." Michel Desnoyers

<sup>xxxv</sup> "J'ai 16 ans et c'est vrai, c'est la première fois que je viens voir un spectacle de danse. [...] Et pourquoi j'ai choisi de venir voir un spectacle c'est que j'ai toujours été fascinée par la danse. Je trouve qu'il y a quelque chose de magnifique, une espèce de grâce dans les mouvements et je trouve ça très beau. Et je voulais voir ce que c'était que d'être là en direct, devant une scène, et de voir les danseurs." Andréa Simard

<sup>xxxvi</sup> "Et puis, chaque fois que je viens voir des spectacles de danse, c'est pour changer la routine comme vous l'avez mentionné, aérer les esprits et faire le plein d'énergie. Les danseurs vraiment se vident et vous remplissent d'énergie quand vous les regardez." Eric Villeneuve

<sup>xxvii</sup> "Je dirais que c'est un peu comme aller au théâtre. Peut-être pour oublier, fuir, évader, s'évader, vivre de nouvelles sensations." Georges-Nicolas Tremblay

<sup>xxviii</sup> "Disons que ce que ça m'apporte c'est une bonne détente. C'est le visuel, c'est l'expression, la liberté." Laurette Hubert

<sup>xxix</sup> "Comme si les danseurs me laissaient entrer dans un monde auquel je n'aurais pas accès dans la vie de tous les jours. En ayant accès à ce monde-là je peux vivre des choses, je peux sentir des choses [...]" Noumbe Diop

<sup>xi</sup> "Je dirais que c'est un peu comme aller au théâtre. [...] Aller s'abandonner au monde des images peut-être. Surtout avec la danse moderne qui ne nous amène pas dans une histoire – ou parfois oui, mais en tout cas – ça laisse libre cours à l'imagination. Pour fuir la réalité peut-être, ou se laisser aller à des images fantastiques, des rêves qu'on voit un peu en réalité, qui sont devant nous. Des choses qu'on aurait pas pu imaginer." Georges-Nicolas Tremblay

<sup>xli</sup> "[Je suis venue pour] l'expérience, c'est de voir des corps en mouvement! C'est quelque chose que je ne connaissais pas énormément, que j'avais le goût de connaître, de sentir, de voir." Noumbe Diop

<sup>xlii</sup> "[...] c'est qu'il y a un flot d'émotions qui rentre et qui est vécu pour le moment du spectacle et qui remplit d'énergie comme je l'ai expliqué tantôt. C'est vraiment ce flot d'émotions qui se mélange à l'intérieur et qui fait réfléchir. Un spectacle me porte à réfléchir sur moi-même, sur mon vécu." Eric Villeneuve



## CHAPTER VIII

### WHAT THE *LUNA* PERFORMANCES MEANT TO PARTICIPANTS: PERCEPTIONS, INTERPRETATIONS AND EVALUATIONS

At the epicenter of the dance event was situated the live performance of the *Luna* choreography, seventy-two minutes when what was happening onstage became the focus of everyone's attention (but for the box office staff and house manager who were busy accounting for ticket sales). Many months of preparation by artists and personnel had been leading to this "core" moment when the choreographic work was presented in the public sphere. This was the time when all were gathered together to bring the *Luna* performance "into existence by the ways they attend to, distinguish, define and act towards [this experiential essence]," as Prus phrased it (1996, p.11).

What notions did the *Luna* performance evoke in the minds, bodies and spirits of those who were dancing and watching? Were those who manipulated the technical effects and administrative tasks on the periphery of the performance drawn into the dance material, above and beyond the attention they paid to fulfilling their practical tasks? This chapter examines how perceptions, interpretations and evaluations of *Luna* were formulated by artistic, specialist and spectating participants, but also by the executive and technical directors of *O Vertigo*.<sup>1</sup> In view of exposing the widest spectrum of choreographic meanings, I have also included an interpretive reading of newspaper previews and interviews written before, and the critical

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<sup>1</sup> The funding agents and board president are not included here because when asked, they offered general impressions of *O Vertigo*'s work but nothing specific in reference to *Luna*.



evaluations written during and after *Luna* performances, throughout its first year of public presentations.

Yet another kind of evaluation of the *Luna* choreography appeared with persistence at various points throughout the research project. This was articulated as someone's estimation that, at a particular moment, the dance was "working" or "not working" (*ça fonctionne, ça ne fonctionne pas* in French). I will explore below a few of its contexts and senses, and how it was made manifest by various participants, according to their particular role and tasks in the event.

In the contemporary dance world of *Luna*, not only was there a wide range of views about what kinds of meanings were embedded in and emerged from the choreography and performance, but there also proved to be a lack of consensus (especially among critics and presenters) as to the value of *Luna* to its spectators, to the contemporary dance world and to society.

### 8.1 Choreographer's initial intentions and intuitive understandings

With her devotion to intuitive dance making, how did choreographer Laurin develop and articulate her own meanings for *Luna*, her choreographic vision? Chapter IV recounted how she co-authored a text with artistic collaborator Morgenthelar for the project proposal (Appendix I) and negotiated her desires and intentions verbally and non-verbally with dancers and artistic collaborators as they developed the work and rehearsed together. She also submitted herself to interviews about various aspects of *Luna* with researchers (myself and others), filmmakers and journalists, and had intimate dialogues with dance programmers, producers and agents. Rehearsal director Brisson provided an additional insight about Laurin's intended meanings when he told me that her understanding of *Luna* was

always evolving as the work advanced, like that of an Impressionist painter (I-AB/RB.)

When I asked Laurin directly about how she “crystallized her understanding and the meaning of the piece,” during our second and last interview (I-GL2), she once again insisted on the primacy of intuition, “the non-verbal,” and that her comprehension was a complex, on-going process:

I don't like to analyze or to comprehend too much. There certainly is a sense, but it will maybe be different from one person to another. There is an aesthetic, but I work a bit with the non-verbal. When I explain things to the dancers and tell them what I'm looking for, I don't think that my way of broaching the subject is like in theater, for example, where one is more precise with the character, the sense, the meaning, the psychology of the character. For me, it's much more important to move forward intuitively and that the dancer proceeds in an intuitive manner. And I sometimes make reference to the descriptive or visual aspects, the atmosphere or the environment. For me, *Luna* is the idea of the stars, the difference between infinitely large and small, the optical elements we have used that bring us back to Copernicus who studied the planets with his glasses, [but] in some future time when we would always be concerned about the environment or the universe. And it's a very complex environment which we are still trying to comprehend. The [idea of the] moon [is present] also for its poetry. So you see, these are the images that I suggest [to the dancers], and that I also suggest in the performance. For me, there are thousands of senses. Each spectator can read [in it] what they will. It's important to conserve this multitude. <sup>i</sup> (I-GL2)

The most explicit meanings expressed by Laurin about *Luna* were those she wrote into the project proposal (Appendix I). This seminal text contained her initial intentions and the seeds of her vision for the new work, even before she began the creative process in studio with the dancers. Here is a brief reminder of the principal intentions and ideas Laurin articulated in writing for this proposal, but reframed this time in the context of this chapter on meaning: (a) the use of the deconstruction principle; (b) revelation of the mechanics of manipulations in duets; (c) the desire to get closer to the dancer's bodies as if a camera executing a slow close-up; (d) the development of a (choreographic) language in which the human dimension springs forth; and (e) the use of technology that would give the audience a view of things they don't usually see. But there was not as yet a title and nor was there a single specific subject to bind the work together as a whole. She had already begun conversations with an astrophysicist and discussing astro-particle physics with dancer Weikart, but the master theme and title *Luna* were chosen by her only after the creative work was well-advanced.

It is significant to note that excerpts from Laurin's initial proposal also found their way into consequent texts: program notes given to the audience (Appendix F), the *Luna* press kit and website page. These were eventually read by audience members, presenters and dance writers and for some became part of their understanding of *Luna*. For instance, phrases that Laurin had written such as "the hidden face of the dance" and "a poetic and sensual work" reappeared frequently throughout the press articles. And so despite her preference for non-verbal intuitive understandings, Laurin's writing -- however scarce -- did in fact become an influential filter through which other participants interpreted the meanings of *Luna*.

It is to be remembered however that Laurin's commitment to intuitive forces and the creativity of her dancers that principally formed and informed the choreographic composition and her own understandings of the dance as

it was taking shape. And so in true Automatist fashion, despite fulfilling her obligation to write an initial artistic statement in the project proposal, she rarely sought to impose a definitive meaning on the dancers or dancing, preferring to evoke a plethora of ideas for *Luna's* artistic and spectating participants.

## 8.2 Insights on meaning from artistic collaborators

Light and image creator Morgenthelar spent more than two hours explaining his aesthetic philosophy of light (I-AM). As it turned out, his artistic ethos meshed easily with that of the Automatists, and so with Laurin's way of creating for *Luna*. In his frame of mind as in Laurin's, meaning is in the mind of the beholder:

[With] a video projector, you can look at it as just another light source, and you can go away from the purely narrative form of projection, and you can also bring it to a more abstract level, like set design. You bring it to a more abstract level where it's not a defined image where you attach a value to it. It's maybe texture that moves, or it's a ghostly image, where you can barely perceive a fixed meaning to the image, but it can work on the subconscious mind. (I-AM)

Like Laurin, he spoke of creating "a kind of universe" with his lighting, set design of projection surfaces and multi-media use of camera and projections. He injected many ideas into the images he brought to *Luna*, such as the fable of the woman in the moon from his childhood. Morgenthelar spoke of his personal account of how *Luna* made meaning: "This piece is very much like a poetic flow for me." He later called it "visual poetry." While the piece for him

has “a lot of abstract stuff,” he adds that there still “is a very concrete, almost literal environment where you can [...] build a sense from your personal experience.” In our interview, he never came to the point of interpreting content specifically, but continued to explain the qualities of the *Luna* universe through poetic metaphors: “I see [this kind of work] like a river, it flows. And it’s very much what I like in this show. The whole combined mix of music and visual, it’s a universe of frequencies.” These frequencies, he added, were sound and light. Light for Morgenthelar was “a visual” as was everything that stimulated the eyes and including the choreography and the costume. So then, finding meaning entailed having the senses stimulated, and then allowing the subconscious to work (I-AM).

Costume designer Lavoie took a look at Laurin’s long-term choreographic development and concluded that she was “advancing well” in her aesthetic because with *Luna* she had moved towards something less literal and thematic. But he also said that in all her works there had been something to capture and hold the public’s attention (*accrocheur* in French). Echoing Morgenthelar’s account of *Luna* in terms of the openness to interpretation (and so abstraction) of the content, he explained approvingly that:

Here she has come out with something more astral, and so it’s a little like...it leaves much room for the images, for we who watch the piece, for the public. And for me, to have a certain degree of openness in a work is good because it takes us towards something larger, stronger.<sup>ii</sup> (I-DL)

And so Lavoie was favorable to what he saw as a growing tendency for Laurin to become abstract, all the while providing a concrete theme in which spectators could ground their attention and understanding.

### 8.3 How the dancers and rehearsal director found meaning for every little movement (or not)

Although choreographer Laurin's vision has proven to be the driving force and final authority in affirming *Luna*'s form, style and content, the dancers inscribed their own aesthetic preferences and outlook, and motivations into the choreography from the beginning of the creative process to the end of the last performance. This was done in many ways, through subtle negotiations with creators and under Laurin's direction. I noted one day, for instance, that the dancers actually reshaped and retimed, actually making changes in the movements (FN: 9-6-00). There was also another time when they filled in some ambiguous details in order to finish a phrase (FN: 10-20-00), and yet another when they expressed their own aesthetic preferences about the shape of their bodies in the air as they were being lifted (FN: 11-15-00). They often "played" with movements they had been given, either with official sanction from Laurin or on their own time, hoping (it seemed to me) that the material they were developing would be noticed, and perhaps integrated permanently into the choreography. Sometimes it was.

I was struck quite early in the fieldwork by how committed the dancers appeared to finding motivation and meaning in the abstract movements of *Luna*. I wondered to what extent it was the choreographer or their own interpretations that determined the meaning. At what point did the meaning crystallize? Did they rehearse on faith for a while before they came to understand the motives that gave meaning to the movements? This seemed to be at the outset the most elusive part of the research project and I presumed that there would be as many answers as there were dancers (FN: 8-9-00).

Those *O Vertigo* dancers who taught *Luna* dance material to students at the company summer workshop had an additional opportunity to examine the choreography's form and content, and so to glean new insights about its meaning for them. It was while observing a class taught by dancers Long and



Barry that I realized these pedagogical situations for students and company dancers alike were times when the *Luna* movement aesthetic was reviewed and newly comprehended by the dancers through a collective pedagogical process with students. In this particular class, I also realized that for the dancers the *Luna* movements were now thought about as part of a fixed repertory, and that so there were right and wrong ways to dance them. A compromise was sought between the original dancers' interpretations and those of the students, and so the movements were changed and transformed. The fragments of *Luna* learned by workshop students were later integrated by Laurin into a new choreography for 50 dancers and performed in public at the end of the workshop, providing new perspectives on the choreography for Laurin as she later confirmed. (FN: 8-10-01)

The dancers have already described, in previous chapters, how it was that they began the creative process by first learning and mastering the physical work of *Luna* (a muscular and neurological process) while at the same time searching how to "find themselves in the universe of *Luna*" (as dancer Barry would say). Rehearsal director Brisson confirmed that "[*Luna*] was made quickly like most of Ginette's pieces" and then "much, much time [is given] to finding the essence" <sup>iii</sup> (I-AB/RB). Brisson's notion of "*Luna*'s essence" was named and perceived in several ways by the dancers as the choreography's theme or through line (*ligne directrice* in French), an ambiance, a presence or state of being, "getting an image of the piece," "cultivating an inner garden," finding out what "is behind the movement."

All dancers clearly expressed a desire and need to find motivation for the movements they were dancing. Dancer Nguyen explained it emphatically:

I don't want to move, I want to dance. To simply execute movements is not sufficient. For me it takes something behind

that and behind the piece in its entirety, it takes a through line.  
 [...] I need to know why I am doing a movement, even if it is  
 not reasoned (logical). Often in dance, it's happens like that,  
 one feels it or not and I need to feel it.<sup>iv</sup> (I-KN)

Dancer Barry elaborated how the dance making operated for everyone from her point of view. She affirmed when working with Laurin on *Luna* and also on previous dances, that the work of making movement and sense was "different for each dancer [...] like a dialogue in that we propose [something] to her and then she can say if it's going in the direction she had imagined or not" (I-AB/RB). This dialogic approach, in which Laurin suggested but rarely imposed specific motivations and meanings, enhanced their sense of creative contribution to the work, as Rose and Barry confirm below.

In the course of fieldwork and interviews, six of the dancers and the rehearsal director spoke about their distinct strategies for motivating the movements by searching for probable interpretations from various perspectives. And it will be interesting to see in this section the way in which their understanding of the movement correlated directly with the life meanings they articulated in the previous chapter, or as Sparshott (1995) proposed: "How one dances may be expected to be governed by why one dances" (p. 53).

### 8.3.1 For Rose, the movement has to "speak"

While Rose didn't venture to articulate interpretations of the choreographic content, he did recall how it was that he came to motivate the movements he was given. Echoing his belief that it is the dance (and not the dancer) that reached the audience, Rose said he sought meaning from within

the movement itself: "The movement has to speak. There are moments when it's like that. A nice opportunity for us." By the latter comment he was referring to the fact that because Laurin rarely gave specific motivations, he was given a welcome opportunity to find his own. From time to time, he continued, she would give the dancers a "through line" by way of explanation so that they might better "understand why she was asking what she asked for." But he affirmed once again that Laurin was a "really physical choreographer" and that his interpretations arose from the experience of the movements themselves. (I-DR, FN: 10-2-00, 10-6-00)

### 8.3.2 Riedes's movement energies and human connections

Into the fieldnote book that I left on the a table in the *O Vertigo* kitchen, Riede inscribed her response to my question of how dancers searched for and found meaning for the movements they danced in *Luna*. (A few pertinent fragments of this text are cited below from the full text that appeared earlier in Riede's biographical profile.) Echoing Nguyen, she explained that just dancing without knowing why was not satisfying. Like many of the other *O Vertigo* dancers, at first she strove to master the technical aspects of the *Luna* movements. Over the years of work with the company she had gleaned an insight about Laurin's preferred movement qualities (or "efforts" in the Laban lexicon). As she explained it, Laurin seemed to "like things very natural without imposed introspection." (I-AR). Later on in the process, Laurin would sometimes give her "more detailed directions, sometimes very specific, but mostly more vague. " It was once the technicalities were integrated into her body that she began "to wonder about meaning" (from comments she wrote in fieldnote book, March 30, 2001). She also specified that meanings for the movements actually emerged for her at three distinct times: (a) when something new is experienced during a performance, (b) during the

individual work she does in small periods “on the side,” and (c) when she is able to experience the dance with exceptional intensity. Among other things, what she looks for are the appropriate “energies” for the movements, and to figure out the nature of her connection with other dancers. (I-AR) Then using the following personal guidelines, she undertakes to find meanings for as many of the movements as possible:

I go by what [the movement] means for myself and what I would like to express, even if sometimes it is only the joy of moving. In some sequences I search for meanings for every single gesture, but that takes a really long time and somehow never ends [...] since I keep changing or clarifying the meaning to stay interested and alive in the movement. (from comments she wrote in the fieldnote book, around March 30, 2001).

This testimony is a reminder once again that the meaning of *Luna* is never entirely fixed and stable, but ever-changing as the dance is inscribed with various interpretations by dance event participants and performed in new contexts.

She also gave a specific example of what kinds of meanings she eventually settled on when speaking about her duet with Rodrigue:

[...] dancing with Marie-Claude has changed for me a lot. I went through a lot of different explorations, but what I seem to be most comfortable with right now is having the image that she’s basically me as well. But, it’s another side of myself...it’s like, the dark creature inside myself. I need my shadow to be full and complete. So I’m just imagining that while I’m dancing with her, and how my relationship is with this shadow of mine, how it’s different from day to day but it’s very natural for me in

that moment. So the movements are inspired by the immediate experience with my relationship to my dark side or my shadow. (I-AR)

Riede also offered her own general interpretation of the choreography as a whole. This proved to be coherent with how dance had finally given her a means, because she grew up within the restrictions of a Communist regime in Eastern Germany, to at last freely express what she felt inside:

[*Luna*] was about exploring all of what's inside me, so the movements that I received from Ginette triggered different emotions inside myself. And for me it was just flowing through all this, allowing [these emotions] to "be there." [There were] very different sensations, all that's inside. It's not very intellectual for me, it's very physical. (CD ROM, Appendix s)

### 8.3.3 The necessity of a binding thematic thread for Nguyen and Lamothe

The key to finding something "behind the movement", for both dancers Nguyen and Lamothe, lay in finding a concrete thematic focus. Nguyen was clear about his aesthetic orientation. He doesn't like a "collage" of little pieces, nor does he care for total abstraction in dance. He needs a proposition (*propos* in French) to support the dancing, elements that can nourish him and ultimately give the audience some elements to help them seize some kind of meaning in the dance. New to dancing with *O Vertigo* and on a limited-time contract, Kha admitted that there were sections of *Luna* that "spoke to him" more than others, especially those that were slower and more somber. In the latter he liked the possibility of having the time to feel things and to try and "say something" with the movement. He was not ready yet to

offer an interpretation of *Luna*, feeling that his work at the moment was to learn how to “feel good” and to like all of the sections so that they could speak to him. (I-KN). Lamothe had learned ways of giving sense to the movements Laurin imposed on him from being coached in dance interpretation by other choreographers, and from his growing understanding of the company style. The theme of *Luna* was close to his own interests: “Every evening I look at the moon. It speaks to me. I know that for Ginette it is not the mythical side that interests her, but it nourishes me. I use this because I find the moon magnificent and marvelous, a star that speaks to me!”<sup>v</sup> (I-PL).

#### 8.3.4 Perceiving *Luna* through Rodrigue’s spiritual lens

Rodrigue articulated a crystal clear sense of the choreography’s meaning through the lens of her spiritual beliefs and practices (described earlier in her biographical profile). Everything she does, and so also her dancing, she said had been an effort to “connect myself to universal, earth-bound and cosmic forces.”<sup>vi</sup> One aspect of her connection was a desire not to become attached to anything and so allow herself to live in the present moment, to “empty out.” Because of this orientation, she alone among her *O Vertigo* colleagues didn’t search for a choreographic through line (*un fil conducteur*) and loved dis-continuities (*des coupures*). She found freedom by being in theatrical time and space. Rodrigue spoke affectionately about Laurin’s metaphor of an interior garden, that she explained each dancer must nourish by seeking its “odor, color and flowers.” Eschewing intellectualism and embracing an intuitive fatalism, she exclaimed: “I need to live it, dance it, breathe it and all of a sudden, it comes! I don’t impose anything.”<sup>vii</sup> There were times when she claimed to have sensed an actual memory in her muscles, multiple layers of sense, or that one small movement gave meaning to all the rest.



What specific kinds of meanings did she actually perceive through the lens of her spirit? An example she gave of her spiritually oriented interpretations of *Luna*: "The story of the large lenses" was that "[they] make me feel how the stars, the elements and the seasons influence us strongly. They make me think about giving birth, and wonderment in the face of the Life Force" <sup>viii</sup> (I-MR).

### 8.3.5 Barry looks for a state of being in which to find herself

Barry has worked with Laurin in the course of many new creations, and found that *Luna* was unlike the others. Rather than a theatrical impersonation, this new piece called for her to "create a presence." Barry tried to articulate how this functioned for her: "It's almost more a state of being, but it has to be cultivated and worked as well; because this piece has different changes in the states but it's all part of one universe. So it's all about finding yourself in this universe and sometimes it takes images." (I-AB)

In her testimonial on the CD ROM (Appendix S) she spoke further and in a poetic manner, about her state of consciousness while dancing *Luna*, by way of astrological imagery suggestive of a narrative progression:

[...] just the fact of being there, being on stage and being open, and letting yourself bathe in the lights and music. It's a bit like being in a very slow orbit in space, and you're aware that there are other dancers or people that are in orbit around you. And every once in a while the orbits cross, or every once in a while the gravity brings us together and we dance, sometimes slowly, sometimes frenetically in space, with speed, with mass, and then the piece moves on. (CD ROM, Appendix S)

And so it appears that with *Luna*, Barry's scientific upbringing had finally served her understanding of dance.

### 8.3.6 Weikart's "imaginary kernel"

As previously revealed, it was Weikart's discussions with Laurin about astrophysics that partly shaped the scientific and philosophical underpinnings for *Luna* in her mind. It was in his testimonial on the company CD ROM (Appendix S) that he clarified his own scientific views and interpretation of *Luna* by describing the images he used to bring sense to his movements while dancing them:

You can find the universe in an atom, and so there's this kind of shifting reality. And for me that sort of imaginary kernel that I refer to somehow, the idea that in all these movements [is that] even if they are infinitely small or very, very tiny, there is still another universe at the end of it. I think that's something that I try to imagine throughout the piece, sort of that if we are in a section of the solar system, if we just kept going and going into this tiny image, then we'd find something really broad and huge. (CD ROM, Appendix S)

His were by far the most clearly intellectual and scientific interpretations of *Luna*'s content, and bore witness to a belief in the power of dance to embody complex ideas and to serve as a metaphor.

### 8.3.7 Brisson listens carefully to Laurin and to the dancers

There were many times during studio sessions, rehearsals and performances that rehearsal director Brisson provided information to dancers that clarified not only how movements needed to be done, but what their intention might be. For instance, it is Brisson along with the dancers' input, who actually creates names for each section of the dance (see cue sheet in Appendix K), and also a notation for the movement phrases (FN:10-23-00). Or in another vein, at another moment, he spoke to Rose about the way he was turning his head and forcing his focus, saying that the extra glance seemed to give the movement a meaning it wasn't meant to have (FN:11-1-00). I asked him directly one day if he drew his understanding of the choreography from what he thought Laurin wanted, from his own sensibility, or something in between. He answered that it was the latter "in between" dynamic that best described the understanding of the *Luna* work-in-progress that he brought to rehearsals. But Brisson affirmed that most important of all for him was to "listen closely" to Laurin and the dancers, and in doing so to create a climate of trust (FN: 8-4-00).

In our interview, he offered a few key words to describe what *Luna's* "essence" was for him in a personal sense: light, peace and calm. (I-AB/RB). And on the company CD ROM (Appendix S) he developed a further interpretation of *Luna* through a series of metaphors that suggested an allegory: "It's based on a circle, it has no beginning and no end. It's like we want to communicate like a satellite, want to give some words [and] 'let go' some movements [in order to] catch some other human being [...] we put our feet on the moon to go further [...]."

#### 8.4 Interpretations and evaluations of the *Luna* choreography by O *Vertigo's* executive and technical directors

The technical and executive directors, although not spectators nor specialists, also offered interpretations and critical assessments of *Luna* in the course of interviews. Their points of view, like the others, were tempered by personal aesthetic points of view but also sprang from their respective perspectives as those insiders who mounted and ran the technical systems of *Luna* (Proulx) and who managed the budget and marketing (Lagacé).

##### 8.4.1 Executive director Lagacé: an enigmatic *Luna*

Lagacé's first response to the question of what he thought about *Luna* was that it was "so rich, full and enigmatic" (in the sense of complex, multi-layered), that it would take him more time to get to know it well. Every time he watches he "sees new stuff." Executive director Lagacé added that with this choreography he saw Laurin as renewing herself and pushing her own artistic boundaries. But he added the critical comment that the dancers still needed to "find their own space in this show." He reminded me that he watches in an atypical way, not for personal enjoyment, but through the eyes of potential dance presenters.

Several aspects and portions of the choreography had touched his imagination already, and he detailed three of them. For instance, he found that "the little (hand) sign language" superimposed over a spoken text "adorable" because somehow reminiscent of sweet images from his childhood. Some of the live film images that were fed through the large lenses and projected on the upstage screen were emotionally moving for him. And at that same moment, there was an "interwoven musical score" that he felt complemented the moving faces on screen quite beautifully. For the

moment, the meanings of *Luna* generally remained somewhat mysterious for him. Lagacé had and would continue to see the performances many times over, and so found that its meaning was not a fixed thing but would evolve even as did the dance (I-BL).

#### 8.4.2 Technical director Proulx: a smaller, more humanistic piece

Proulx concurred that with *Luna*, Laurin had changed her choreographic “language” (a reference to style and syntax). From his backstage point of view behind the computers and lighting console, he saw the integration of new technologies as the trademark of *Luna*. Proulx provided a singular insight: that the choreographic structure and even the gestures themselves were formulated in response to the constraints imposed by body microphones and a smaller stage space. He observed that the movements themselves were actually smaller than usual and that vertical space was exploited more than in previous pieces in order to compensate for the lack of horizontal playing area. His point of view from the back of the house and facing the stage caused him to look down on the performance from above (*en plongée*), always seeing the dancing along with the stage floor and perceiving the entirety of the stage action (*l'ensemble*) because of his distance from performers. His comments reminded me that everyone who watches the performance has quite literally a different angle of view from all of the others. And in my experience, a change of angle when watching a performance for a second time really changes what is seen and so understood.

What about the meaning of *Luna* for Proulx? Did he like the work? In comparison with other works by Laurin in the past six years, *Luna* had touched him more emotionally than spiritually. Her use of restrained space and movement had the effect she desired in her project proposal, bringing him closer to the dancer and the humanity they exuded (*qui s'en dégage.*) On

the subject of abstract vs. concrete content, Proulx weighed in his opinion, on a historic note: "There are strong images that bring one into worlds that are a little more concrete, I would say, than towards a certain contemporary figurative abstraction." <sup>ix</sup> Not only was he emotionally moved, but also found that *Luna* had a "beautiful homogeneity," and that he adored the sound composition. But he commented that even after six years with the company and with his interest in understanding dance, he conceded that he was still not fully able to understand the enigmatic visual aspects of Laurin's choreography. (I-JP)

#### 8.5 Audience's strategies for apprehending and interpreting performance experience

What happened in the bodies, minds and psyches of the 22 focus group spectators -- sitting relatively still and silent in the dark -- as the performance of *Luna* unfolded in front of them? What kinds of sense and meaning emerged from their spectating efforts? In contrast to the dance professionals, the spectators spent a relatively limited amount time -- two hours more or less -- engaged in the *Luna* dance event. In this sense they might be thought of as interested onlookers, but were actually crucial to the meaningful outcome of the dance event. More than a year and a half of preparation was put into the outcome of a public performance. And various *Luna* participants in this study, particularly artists and presenters, expressed the belief in this chapter that artistic purpose and meaning came to fruition at the moment when the choreography was performed before an audience.

There was also empirical evidence from the audience focus groups, as well as from the interviews with other participants who attended the performance, that each spectator came to (and left) the theater with what phenomenologists have called "a horizon of expectations" (Fraleigh, 1987 and 1999). In terms of a dance performance like *Luna*, this refers to the lived



experiences and accumulated knowledge of lives lived outside the moment of performance and that served to shape the processes of choreographic interpretation. For instance, in speaking about the *Luna* performance she had attended during the *Festival international de nouvelle danse*, dance historian Tembeck described how it was that *Luna* had seemed as if a contemplative respite from the intense commotion created by the dense dance festival format and the recent terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in New York City:

I found [*Luna*] ...a bit contemplative. I found it ...peaceful. And I think it's a piece that I enjoyed seeing after September 11<sup>th</sup>. [...]  
There was in our daily lives, so much...violence, anxiety, disruption of world order, that seeing something that was more meditative, within the compressed thing of a three-week festival...(sighs with relief) Aaaahhh! You see? So it depends how you go to a piece, if you've come at the end of the last of a busy week. You know there are so many things that subjectively come into the way you see something. (I-IT)

*Luna* focus group members also described a certain range of meaning-making strategies and interpretive themes that will be identified in this section. At the core of each of their "modes of apprehension" (e.g. interpretive strategies) elaborated below there lay beliefs about what the arts meant within the on-going process of their lives. And so dance spectating was looked at here as a meaningful part of one's repertoire of life activities. Meaning making is considered as a process in which the live choreographic performance is experienced, apprehended and interpreted, to be finally understood (in some way) and evaluated by each spectator.

There did emerge one clear consensus about meaning among all spectators questioned: that what meanings the performance came to have

were a matter of personal interpretation. As has been seen in the previous sections of this chapter, the choreographer and dancers would concur. The youngest focus group member Andrea Simard told us how it was that she had learned this art ethos from her parents, also members of the focus group. She explained how it functioned for her:

I found it strange when at the end of the performance I heard people talking [during the post-show audience talk]. They spoke about the dark side of the moon, and things that I hadn't really understood. But I realized that it didn't matter because each person has their own vision of the performance and that there weren't better and worse ones. [It's] because each one sees it from [the standpoint of] what s/he is and what person they are. That's art! It reaches everyone, [and] each has their own vision. We watch according to what we live in our lives. That's all. \* (Simard, FG3)

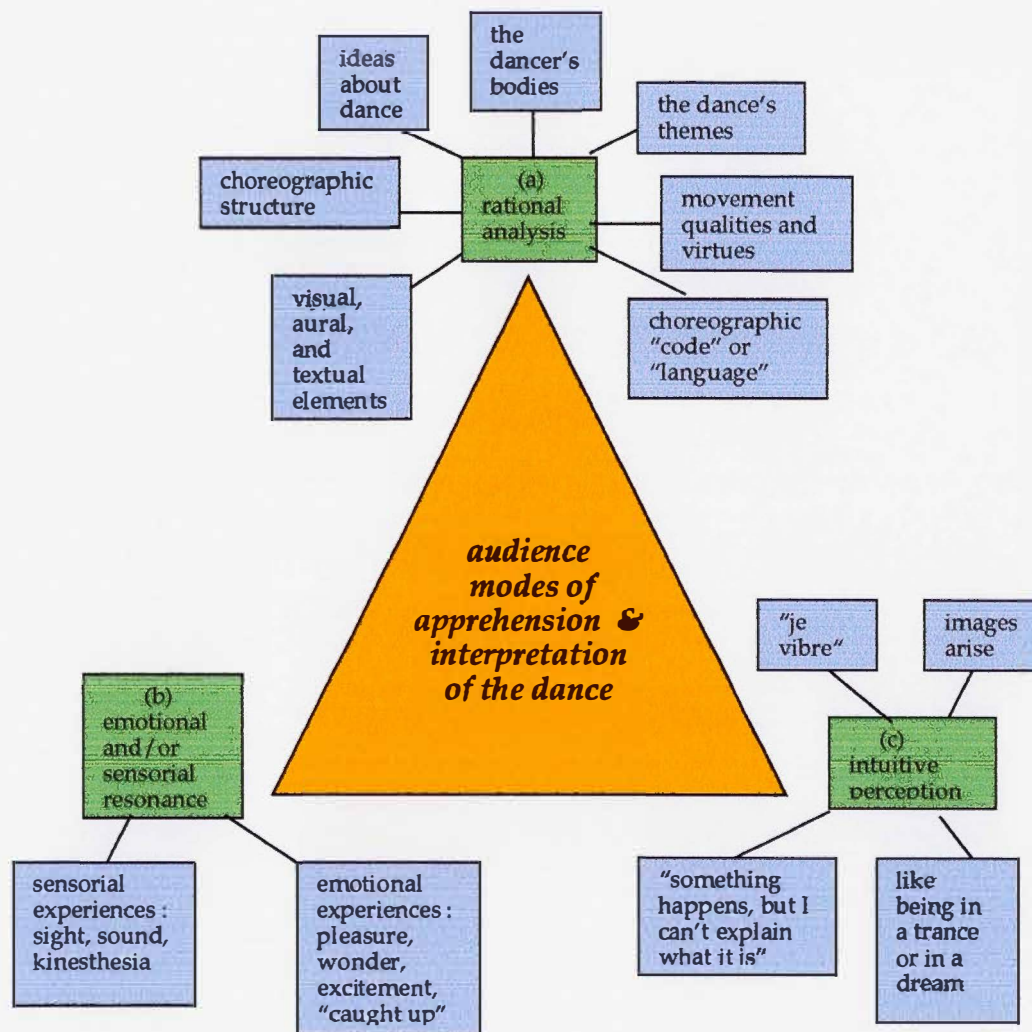
Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (1998) explains this contemporary art outlook as one that "values the pleasure of the unfamiliar and the incomprehensible" and so "audiences [who] know how to yield to 'experience,' to sensuous immediacy, to presence, energy, and actuality" (pp. 231-2). These kinds of attitudes were present among focus group members, as will be seen.

In my interpretations of *Luna* audience focus group discussions, like Bennett (1997) I have considered spectators not only as "receivers and perceivers" of the performance experience, but also as active agents who sought to make the experience meaningful for themselves and for the companions with whom they attended the event. As participants engaged in the dance event I also see them as having contributed to the ever-changing meaning of the choreography, for themselves and others, as the performance occurred on a particular evening. In an earlier chapter, some of the dancers

reported actually feeling and reacting to the presence of the audience and their subtle reactions to the dancing.

It is also important to factor into these audience interpretations of *Luna* the particular environments in which the dancing took place, described in some detail in the chapters on event space and time, and activities. Each performance of *Luna* was framed for its spectators in the sense that Foster (1986) and Goffman (1974) gave the term: the social conventions which helped determine the viewer's perspective, and which aroused their expectations before, and influenced their interpretations during and after watching the dance. Among the "framing devices" pertinent to *Luna*, which were determined by the artistic and presenting organizations, Foster (1986, pp. 64-65) listed the announcement of the event (see *Luna* poster in photo 10), its location, its title, its beginning moment (and I would add the ending), and the contact that it makes with the audience through the focus of the dancers. Foster also includes other frames that are made apparent in this study: the reputation (and I would add the ambiance) of the theatre venue, assumptions about the dance genre and company because of the ticket price, the vantage point offered from where one is seated, and the way in which lighting and other devices signal the beginning and ending of the performance.

I have grouped the various interpretive perspectives that emerged during the spectator focus groups into three genres (each with its corresponding sub-themes) which I have called: (a) rational analysis, (b) emotional and/or sensorial arousal, and (c) intuitive perception. These perspectives can also be thought of as on-going modes through which a spectator undertakes a meaning-making process of the performance. Figure 8.1 below offers a schematic summary of these modes and their genres:



**Figure 8.1** Audience focus group members' modes of apprehension and interpretation of the *Luna* dance performances. (The elements are presented in a random order and not a hierarchy.)

Before examining each mode of apprehension and interpretative strategy on its own merits, it is pertinent to mention that they were rarely present in isolation. Most focus group spectators described combinations of two or even three, as did Jimmy Simard: "My way of understanding and

being touched [by *Luna*] occurs on many levels. I am at the same time artistic and scientific " <sup>xi</sup> (FG3).

Some kind of meaning making transpired for all spectators in this focus group. There was not a single example of non-sense reported, or lack of any meaning at all<sup>2</sup>, perhaps because the post-performance focus groups tended to attract those with a strong interest in making sense of *Luna*. Even the most resolutely non-verbal and intuitive among them managed somehow to articulate in some way what the dance performance meant to them. An example of the urge to grasp meaning was vividly present, for instance, in this neophyte dance-goer's declaration: " [...] there is a part of me that tries to understand what I feel and what is happening in front of me" <sup>xii</sup> (Diop, FG1). Diop expressed his frustration at not being able to understand everything he saw, but then succeeded in finding the words to describe the personal meanings he had experienced that evening.

### 8.5.1 Rational analysis

Ample evidence of intellectual activity among the great majority of these focus group spectators belies one of contemporary dance's essentialist myths: that dance is a resolutely non-verbal art form which cannot and even should not be explained through words. This non-verbal bias was especially prominent among those spectators who favored emotional and sensorial interpretations.

These rational spectators evoked the metaphor of dance as a language. The notion that dance is a code or language, acquired (or decoded) through repeated experience like any non-native language, or that can be appreciated for

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<sup>2</sup> In my experience, those audience members who declare being unable to understand anything about the dance are usually referring to an expectation of narrative or story telling, and are confounded by the abstraction of most contemporary dance. Others who report disappointment with an evening of dance performance have explained to me that the aesthetics were not to their liking and so not "meaningful" to them.

it's poetic qualities, was discussed in diverse ways by five members of the focus group. In their own words, they spoke of dance in terms like "a theater of the body," a language which is not spoken, and as a "code with no story." Here are two diverse samples of this kind of rational meaning making:

I think everything we see in our daily lives we interpret. ...  
Everything has meaning. That's basic [and] a kind of  
fundamental thing about being a human being. And I think we  
are quite able to turn gestures into metaphors, just kind of like  
a language. ... I think you have to maybe acquire a  
language...to have seen some of it before, in order to do it with  
more ease. I think it's kind of like speaking, a kind of body,  
visual language. (Kevin, FG2)

Tonight there were movements, movements that express those  
ideas. I guess because they are logical, you see them again and  
again. [There are] production clues that you recognize :  
shadows on the backdrop. Some of it [is] almost literal once  
you've seen it. It's just a language like any other. There's  
certainly something there to be understood. It's not random.  
(Cashing, FG2))

Visual artist Kevin thinks of choreography as "a metaphoric language composed of gestures" that he perceives visually, while Cashing interprets the ideas expressed by the dance's movements, ideas that she is now able to interpret quite concretely because a frequent dance-goer and dance student.

An intellectual interpretative process was also the choice of those focus group spectators who expressed a belief in art as way of gaining knowledge about the world and of better understanding oneself. Their statements revealed that as they watched, they projected and perceived ideas and



metaphors and made associations. They envisioned as well fragments of stories by way of certain aspects of the dance that had attracted their attention: gestures, relationships, costumes, images, and so on. They then voiced interpretations of various kinds that went running through their minds as they watched the performance.

Despite the title theme of “luna” (moon) chosen by the choreographer, the rational analyses of the focus group members remained in the form of a multiple fleeting themes and images rather than an all-encompassing coherent narrative. As one audience member remarked: “I won’t tell you everything that came into my head this evening [while watching *Luna*], but it touches on everything. It even included dying, birth and is full of life’s details” <sup>xiii</sup> (E. Renaud, FG3). Here is a detailed monologue from spectator Logueux about how this kind of intellectual process functioned in her mind (as it did for several others):

When [the *Luna* dancers] gesture...at one point they were all in the back making repetitive gestures and I said ‘there, that’s about work, and they are caught up in everyday life.’ One makes associations...I don’t force it. I just feel at certain moments that that was it. But it wasn’t important. I don’t want to seize [the meaning] at any price. But whether [you do] or not [you try] ... like the large dolls...at another moment you have other images [like] the married woman, but that was also the illusion [image] for me. For a fraction of a second I saw that, but afterwards I let go of the movement and all that. In any case, one always has a little flash somewhere or other. You’re always in the material. There are objects, the bodies are there. And at one moment they were all in beige and the colored t-shirts arrived and you see that things move and change. Sometimes they were just men and women, and

already you feel something. To have the real meaning isn't important ... the relationships ... there was support, rejection, a little battle, love, tenderness. It's also important to feel what the body is expressing. You need to feel something. You can't only be in the abstraction of movement.<sup>xiv</sup> (Logueux, FG3)

What came to light from a close reading of Logueux's explanation are certain beliefs and recommendations about the meaning-making process. Also notable was the role she ascribed to bursts of insight. Logueux told us that it was important not to force meaning but rather to *allow* oneself to feel something, and that it isn't important to find the "real" meaning, that finding meaning was a matter of making personal associations. She told us that meanings came from "being in the material" of the dance, the people, objects and images presented. It was a matter of letting fragments of interpretations come and go "in a flash." And one idea she had in common with many of the other spectators is that one cannot possibly remain only in the domain of abstraction, but that the mind and psyche are always striving to make concrete meanings. I also experienced this desire for meaning. As one of those who sought and found self-knowledge, Desnoyers explained that watching dance evoked for him a sense of self-recognition, a process in which he made personal connections to various aspects of the dance:

I let myself be seduced visually and that makes connections to other aspects of my being and from that beginning point there are details, elements with which I feel comfortable and I like that... it's as if what was in front of me was an extension of myself.<sup>xv</sup> (Desnoyers, FG2)

One particularly intellectually minded focus group member was Normand Simard, a career psychologist. He capped the Chicoutimi focus group by elaborating a theory about creativity from the field of psychology.

Simard advanced the belief that we don't really need to know what the author intended. He thought that people tend to make occasional rational connections with the choreography in order to find pleasure. He explained further that two kinds of rational thought operate as we experience art. The first is an Aristotelian set of logical explanations. And the second is

the other kind of thinking which is analogical, and also a kind of thought. It's the thinking in which we make associations, and in that way we tap into emotion. And it also has its rationality, this kind of thinking, in which one thing makes us think of another, and another. <sup>xvi</sup> (N. Simard, FG3)

Artist-geniuses like Picasso and Laurin, he added, are those "who have mastered a language that few have mastered, the language of analogy"<sup>xvii</sup> (N. Simard, FG3). And so, as his theory went, choreographies like *Luna* give adults a chance to experience the pleasure of exercising what is the first and earliest kind of rationality: the analogical way of making free associations from what we see.

Not surprisingly, those spectators who were practicing artists or those with considerable arts experience, possessed well-developed points of observation, interpretive methods and analytic criteria. Their assessments of the performance were at times even focused in on small details of the technical craft of dance and choreographic techniques (e.g. whether or not the dancers' feet were sufficiently well-pointed, if the dance was too long to sustain interest throughout, etc.). Dancer Lamb, for instance, with her long experience and training in dance, was drawn to how the *Luna* dance material brought out the special qualities of each dancer and to structural levels, as she put it, being "more inclined to look at the parts than the whole [and at] small details rather than the whole" (Lamb, FG1). Her views even included a critical analysis of choreographic structure, and when it seemed to "slow

down" and she thought to herself "well, they could have cut that out, it could have ended five minutes ago" (Lamb, FG1).

Rational approaches to interpretation were characteristic of those who came to *Luna* as if to an educational experience, bearing further witness to their affiliation with the idea of art as a rational form of expression and idea-based art making.

### 8.5.2 Emotional and/or sensorial arousal

There was ample evidence of an emotional apprehension of the *Luna* performance among focus group participants as they watched the dancing. Spectator Jimmy Simard questioned why we should even seek a rational explanation of each dance gesture. For Simard contemporary dance is about the emotions he finds "inside" the gestures (FG3).

Many other focus group members concurred, and like Potvin expressed the belief that "you need to rise above that (the movements themselves) to feel the emotion, feel what is happening" and that "the code ... is about the emotion that happens <sup>xviii</sup> " (Potvin, FG3). Villeneuve characterized this mode of dance-watching as "a flow of emotion that one enters into and is lived during the time of the performance" <sup>xix</sup> (Villeneuve, FG1).

Not only did some of these emotionally-oriented spectators believe that meaning depends on detecting emotion emanating from the dancing and the dancers, and their own emotional arousal in consequence, but like Hobden they expressed a strong non-verbal and non-rational bias towards dance interpretation (ironically expressed verbally):

I think looking for meaning in dance is useless because dance is very nonverbal and the reaction we have to dance is also

nonverbal. [...] I think maybe if at the beginning of the performance people would be told not to worry about meaning and just enjoy the piece, I think it would make things easier for the spectator and for everyone. (Hobden, FG1)

Closely allied to emotional apprehension was a sensorial orientation to meaning making to the point where both emotional and sensorial modes were oftentimes expressed in combination. But there were at least three focus group spectators who spoke about having experienced the dance performance specifically through their senses by way of sight and sound, but especially in the case of dance, through the sense of kinesthesia. Dancers and dance anthropologists commonly call this latter way of perceiving “kinesthetic empathy” (e.g. Sklar, 2001). Like the other five, according to Fitt (1988, pp. 266-7), this “sixth sense” has its own sensory organs called proprioceptors and found in the skeletal muscles, the tendons in and around joints, and deep inside the ear. Fitt explained how they serve to provide feedback to the central nervous system regarding muscle contraction, relaxation, tension and stretch as well as joint position and velocity. The proprioceptors capture a stimulus in an environment, and then transform it into a nerve impulse to be conducted into a specific region of the spinal cord or brain that is then translated into perception. The kinesthetic sense is then the perception of both body motion and position (body position, position of the body’s segments and movements). As described in Chapter V, I observed in myself and other kinesthetically-oriented spectators the tendency to bring the emotional and sensorial stimulus manifested in the *Luna* performance directly into our nervous systems, resulting in small but visible, sympathetic micro-movements in our bodies as we watched.

A strong showing of belief in the primacy of emotion and sensation among *Luna*’s spectators in their apprehension of *Luna* came as no surprise. In over 28 years of experiencing the Québec dance world – among its artists,

students, specialists – my American taste for a formal body-based aesthetic has been confronted by what I have perceived as the highly charged physicality and emotion of Québec contemporary choreographers. In a 1992 essay for dance spectators I wrote:

In many ways these dancers are the recognizable great grandchildren of this artistic revolution. In its manifesto *Le Refus Global* dancer Françoise Sullivan (1948) declared that 'Above all the dance is a reflex, a spontaneous expression of keenly felt emotions...one proceeds from the inside out...there are vital needs, irresistible forces.' It is still true that a large number of Québécois dancers and choreographers can be distinguished by their introspective, emotionally saturated bodies and aesthetics. The exploration of 'feeling states' nourishes the gestural and even structural choices: there is no motion without emotion<sup>3</sup>. They seem forever to be seized and driven into cathartic states by external forces. And so a central theme seems to be embodied in this physical struggle, as inner and outer forces vie for control. (p. 16)

My own experiences and observations have also been affirmed in numerous writings of critics and historians, notably Tembeck's definitive thesis (1994b) on the characteristics of the Montréal style of contemporary dance. In one section of her research she synthesized and analyzed various perceptions of 17 dance creators and writers from Québec through their writings, coming from the U.S. (New York City), Germany and France. Three of the nine features she isolated as "points of convergence," and which refer to a marked emotivity and physicality in Montréal choreography, were: (a)

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<sup>3</sup> This Expressionist art movement that made a fetish of emotion stands in stark contrast with a group of resolutely Modernist dance artists in the U.S. in the same period. An often-quoted credo of abstractionist choreographer Alwin Nikolais: "I am speaking of motion and *not* emotion!"



the reflection and the result of social tensions, (b) based on emotivity, expression and intensity, and (c) dynamic, energetic and possessing immediacy<sup>xx</sup> (p. 57).

### 8.5.3 Intuitive perception

Yet another way of apprehending *Luna* emerged from the focus group conversations, distinguishable from the previous two because subliminal. A small but significant number of audience members (five) gave replies to the question “what happened for you during the dance performance?” that implied a kind of a perception that I have determined as intuitive. Although intuition is a complex concept with many possible definitions, I am thinking here of those spectators’ responses to *Luna* that seemed to resist explicit verbal explanation and so suggested a kind of understanding through direct perception or apprehension, subconscious perception and immediate cognition. Here are two excerpts that illustrate these kinds of intuitive ways of apprehending *Luna*:

I don’t know what keeps me coming back to *O Vertigo*. ... It’s like having a dream except that it’s not your dream. It has the same amount of surprise and you can’t put it into words right away. (Kevin, FG2)

It [the *Luna* performance] impregnated me also at the level of the music, made me resonate enormously. There was a lot of music tonight that passed right through my body. All the while watching the images, I felt practically like I was in a trance at a certain moment. (J. Simard, FG3)<sup>xxd</sup>

"Something happens," "I resonate," "it's like being in a dream not your own," "I fell into a trance," "I drown in the magic of it." Just a short enigmatic phrase was offered up at certain points by intuitive spectators to anchor their experience in the realm of the verbal. Whatever the experience was, it seemed (at least for these spectators) to be desirable, even pleasurable in the sense that "it" kept them coming back to performances, made their dance spectating worthwhile.

These intuitive spectators weren't allied to a single dance view or motive for dance-going, but among them were those who admired ("I just enjoy"), felt ("I resonated"), and immersed ("like being in a dream"). Notably, none here associated themselves with the motives of escape or reflection. But intuitive apprehension might also be described as a non-rational faith in the existence of a subconscious that operates while watching a dance performance, outside of conscious effort and which functions as do dreams. Dance events for these spectators then are occasions in which they can allow their subconscious mind to come into play.

It is also possible to conclude that the speakers here simply felt inarticulate and at a loss for words. But at least two (Kevin and Tremblay) were practicing artists who proved quite knowledgeable and experienced about the art world. Jimmy Simard also had much to say about his rational side as well, and the Wilsons were well-educated professionals. Because they all articulated explicit ideas about art at other moments during the focus groups, I have concluded that they must have *chosen* intuition deliberately as one of their preferred strategies for dance spectating.

Dance phenomenologist Fraleigh (1987) slips into poetic metaphor when she elucidates the phenomenon of intuition as an "immediate grasp of the world" and the "insight (in-sight) (that is) light, graceful and effortless" (p. 168). She even ventured to claim that dances are created and understood *first of all* through intuition. But participants in the *Luna* study have borne

witness to diverse modes of apprehension and not only intuition, as they make meaning out of the dance performance.

As with the previous interpretive strategies, intuitive apprehension is anchored in a specific artistic school of thought. In the wake of the destructive forces of technology unleashed during WW II, the Dadaists called for no less than an artistic revolution against the tradition of science itself. They initiated a regime of irrational art-making procedures. This new art was to be "absurd and playful, confrontational and nihilistic, intuitive and emotive" (Atkins, 1990). The Surrealists who followed them drew on the Dadaist contribution of Automatism (pictorial free association), giving "a psychological twist which helped to popularize the Freudian fascination with sex, dreams and the unconscious" (Atkins, 1990, p. 70). It was the era of the psyche and the origin of the concept of a non-conscious domain of thought, variously called the unconscious, subconscious, pre-verbal, the id. As noted earlier, Québec's own 1948 artistic revolution *Le Refus Global* also adopted Automatism as a central artistic strategy of which Laurin is a disciple. And so the idea of irrational, intuitive art making is still found deeply embedded within certain innovative arts practices today like those of Laurin.

#### 8.5.4 Vocational strategies for interpretation

The focus group discussions revealed a notable correlation between spectators' vocational skills and their strategies for choreographic interpretation. I am including all four samples that I found, because each presents a distinct and informative viewpoint:

From a hand sign interpreter for the deaf:

In this performance I was struck by the sharp and insistent gestures that kept reoccurring. And I said [to myself] 'they will

explain this to us sooner or later'. And finally the explanation came. It was like a glorification of hand-sign language. It was great because that's the kind of gesturing that deaf-mutes do. It's a language that is not spoken, and it's great that a choreographer seizes onto that. (Roy, FG2)<sup>xvii</sup>

From an osteopath reputed for treating dancers:

I guess I'm more interested in feeling how the dance flows, the images and the kinesthetic reactions I have in my own body when seeing the dance. (Hobden, FG1)

From a psychologist :

To add something from my view as a psychologist, because we speak so much about rationality and all that. For me, creativity must be studied with much rationality. ... What we need in order to find a certain pleasure is to make rational links from time to time, and these performances permit us to do that. (N. Simard, FG3)<sup>xviii</sup>

From a language translator :

I have intense feelings at an evening like tonight that these people are speaking a language that I don't know much about but it's extremely eloquent. [...] I want to know this language more but I don't have to in order to enjoy it. (Wilson, FG2)

These citations demonstrate specific ways in which these spectators applied their work life skills and knowledge to various levels of choreographic interpretation. In these excerpts, interpretive strategies and orientations include a consideration of dance gestures as a non-verbal language, attention to kinesthetic empathy with the dancers and the flow of images, seeking the

pleasure in making rational links to the performance. In other words, for these *Luna* spectators, their vocational orientations provided a framework through which they came to understand and explain their experience of *Luna*.

#### 8.5.5 How arts literacy is acquired

How had *Luna* spectators gained whatever knowledge they had acquired about contemporary dance? Since there is little formal initiation in Québec's primary and secondary schools but for a small number of programs headed by dance specialist educators, knowledge about dance is often gleaned in informal ways.

In terms of experience in dance going, five of the audience focus group members had attended *Luna* as their first experience of a contemporary dance performance. There were ten who spoke of attending contemporary dance only occasionally (including the responses "several times," "once in a while," and "many times a year"). In this group were also those who were practicing artists and those who taught in the arts field. Finally, five focus group members, including two dance professionals, were ardent dance-goers in the sense that they reported attending dance "regularly" and "frequently", some of them every week and as often as possible, even when it meant traveling great distances.

But in terms of getting an arts education, there is little formal training available in performing arts spectating, better known in English Canada as "arts appreciation" (the theme of certain university courses for non-dance majors) or "arts literacy" (Van Gyn, 1993, in title of study). In local educational institutions there do exist a small number of dance classes and artistic field trip activities for students and teachers of various ages and levels of experience. *O Vertigo* had performed for and given workshops to elementary school children in the past, as letters on the studio bulletin board attested. And there have long been opportunities to read about and discuss

dance performances with friends and specialists, some artists offer program notes about their work, and journalists write previews and reviews of dance performances in newspapers. But learning about contemporary dance for non-dance professionals in Canada is by-and-large an oral (or more appropriately perhaps a “kinesthetic”) tradition, passed on from parents to children, among friends and acquaintances.

From evidence in the focus groups, each audience participant at *Luna* had developed a perspective and meaning-making process gleaned from whatever formal or informal dance education they had been able to find. Some of their understanding of contemporary dance was acquired through their family, social and cultural environment, as witnessed by one seasoned *Luna* dance-goer:

My mother was a writer and she brought us very often to see artistic performances like dance, theatre, exhibitions, sculptures and paintings. Even when we were that tall [he gestures] and we hardly understood what was going on. (Hobden, FG1))

This brings to mind once again Cloutier and Provonost’s notion of “networks of sociability” (1996, p. 76) and finding in their study that one’s family, friends and co-workers can influence one’s art-going choices. In the same spirit I would add, from my own observations in and out of the field that those dance-going companions who accompany spectators inevitably contribute to how the performance is experienced and understood through a verbal and non-verbal sharing of reactions and impressions.

The *Luna* focus groups necessarily included spectators with enough interest in the arts that they were willing to devote an extra hour of their evening exchanging ideas about dance with fellow audience members and myself. This arts-positive attitude was confirmed by their behavior during the discussions. All of them without exception contributed ideas and



demonstrated spontaneous enthusiasm, proving eager to tell their stories and to have them on record.

Most likely because my focus groups included only these highly motivated arts aficionados, I recorded only two incidences of a negative attitude towards dance (childhood classical ballet classes in these instances) in the course of the conversations: "My mother dragged me to ballet when I was six years old. I wasn't very fond of it at that age. I'd rather do things like climb trees." (Dura, FG1) and "[...] a friend of my parents [thought I should go to ballet class. And so I did, and I was four and I hated it." (Lamb, FG1). In the previous chapter I explained how it was that taking dance classes, even when the experience was unpleasant, had brought certain focus group members to continue a life practice of dance spectating.

In terms of arts literacy, the great majority of the dance-goers in these focus groups might be found somewhere around the mid-point of Van Gyn's "Arts Literacy Continuum" (1993, pp. 262-265). This was part of a model elaborated within a cross-Canada study aimed at fostering a wider appreciation of the arts in Canadian society. According to her criteria, Van Gyn might locate most of the Luna audience focus group members in the category of spectators she called "perceptive." In her study, she created a list of characteristic behaviors that were manifested by these perceptive spectators, which bore resemblance to my own findings as well. Van Gyn's "perceptive spectators" and most of my audience focus group members were those who had: (a) expressed a need for the arts; (b) sought out arts experiences; (c) kept themselves well-informed about the arts; (d) enjoyed discussions about art (and so joined the focus groups); (e) took risks in their artistic choices; and (f) considered arts participation as part of their personal development. As Lorette Hubert exclaimed, when asked why she came to the *Luna* performance, after taking her retirement: "[...] why not initiate oneself to something different, to see, to open the spirit, to become initiated to something new?" "xāv" (FG3).

In Van Gyn's arts literacy continuum, the highest level of literacy is accorded to those spectators who feel that they are not separate from the art world, but in fact participating members of their arts community. Six of the *Luna* focus group members can be seen as belonging to this level: those who recounted having personal or professional arts practices of their own, an osteopath specializing in dancers' injuries, and season ticket holders who attended dance performances frequently.

Van Gyn's study and model are the outcome of a need for arts advocacy strategies in a society that has few venues by which the general public can educate themselves about the arts and in which the public education system puts a comparatively low value on the arts in their curriculum.

#### 8.6 Presenters' analyses and critiques

It might well be called "the presenting gaze" or in other words, presenters watch performances with unique frames of reference that emerge from their functional role in the dance event. And I know that for myself, this presenters' spectating mode has become a permanent "occupational hazard" (or *déformation professionnelle* as the French say it).

How does it function? At the first level of this gaze, as recounted by Wexler, Boucher, Schwartz and Heun, *Luna* was watched as if through the eyes of their local audiences. Also at a first sitting, whether at a live showcase like CINARS or on the videotape sent to them by *O Vertigo*, the presenters were obliged to keep in mind the inevitable calculation of necessary stage space, number of hotel rooms needed for the touring company, cost of transporting the set, and other technical and administrative issues. And finally, these presenters inevitably linked the meaning of the dance performance to the larger world of current events and socio-cultural context in which it took place, as illustrated below by the testimony of Wexler and Boucher. It was only after this set of interpretations and evaluations were in

progress that the presenters moved on to a second level in which they could allow themselves to respond directly and personally to the artistic resonance of *Luna* itself.

In view of revealing the researcher's bias, it is pertinent here to remember that being a dance presenter myself, I know all of the presenters exposed here as professional colleagues and many of them have even become friends. We are all aware of these additional frames of reference we put into practice when watching and evaluating dance because of the role we play as those who select and mount dance performances.

#### 8.6.1 Presenters' gaze: the functional 1<sup>st</sup> phase

In choosing whether or not to program *O Vertigo*, Wexler first had to determine whether the dance company would be able to draw enough audience to balance the expenses of self-presenting at his 600-seat theater in New York City, and if their aesthetic would complement his on-going dance season and attract the interest of his usual audiences. His assessment of their application to present their work at *The Joyce* contained many of his selection criteria, as he put it:

When they come to The Joyce, *O Vertigo* comes in under our rental program. They self-presented here, so they put in their application, and they seemed, or I determined that they were a company of quality. [...] The dancers were very exciting, they were very skilled dancers, the production values were very high. [...] I thought it would enhance the season, and expose the New York audiences to that style of work, very physical actually, I would sort of classify it in the European style. They are our neighbors to the North, from Canada, and I think there's some

appeal to bringing Canadian artists to New York [and that] people are curious about what is happening in Montréal. (I-MW)

He went on to explain that they were originally being presented in the context of the Québec -New York Festival, sponsored by the Québec government and which was ultimately cancelled because their performances were scheduled to take place only two weeks after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. *O Vertigo* decided to proceed with the performances in spite of the situation, and Wexler remarked: "I think they suffered a little bit [at the box office]. [...] it was very difficult circumstances just crossing the [U. S.-Canada] border." But he concluded that "artistically, the event was well-received" and that although "a lot of New Yorkers were not prepared to go out to the theater quite yet", so soon after the tragedy, those who came seemed to enjoy the performance." But, he added, at more than seventy minutes in length with no intermission, it had been too long to hold the interest of some of his American spectators who tended to have short attention spans (I-MW).

As a Montréal presenter in the hometown of *O Vertigo*, Boucher had been watching Laurin's work since her first choreographic efforts in the 1980s. Boucher had always thought of Laurin as "an extraordinary dancer with an extraordinary physical energy" among the 4 or 5 Québec choreographers who were early on identified by the collective dance milieu as having great potential and originality. Another advantage for a dance festival like the *Festival international de nouvelle danse*, Boucher explained, was Laurin's choice of concrete themes that she believed were "easier for the public" to understand than many of those of her artistic peers. As for *Luna*, it was difficult for Boucher to speak of the sense of the work: "I didn't really see much of it, because it was the middle of the festival. My mental state was a little crazy. [And so] I probably better remember the little excerpt I saw six months before, in her studio [...]. That festival, with [the terrorist attacks on]

September 11, was quite crazy" <sup>xxv</sup> (I-DB). Like Boucher, some presenters were not even able to "see" the dance in terms of personal resonance and meaning beyond the needs of their venues and audiences.

In the context of the *Tanzhaus* season in Düsseldorf, German dance presenter Schwartz explained that *O Vertigo* fell into the category of "international appearance" in which they invite a company from outside of Germany to perform every two months. He had paired up with colleague Walter Heun to bring *Luna* to Europe for the premiere performance. He had already succeeded in developing an interest in the company from earlier performances, liked the technological theme and artistic collaborators (especially Swiss-born Morgenthelar), and had met with company agent Plukker just as he had been looking for partners for the first European tour (I-SS).

Another German dance producer Heun had been a long-time unequivocal supporter of Laurin's work. He proposed being a co-producer and lending the financial and physical resources of his organization to help realize the premiere performance of *Luna* at *lucerntheater* in Switzerland. (He produced dance in both Germany and in his role as artistic director of the dance programming for the Swiss theater.) His view of choreographer Laurin was admiration for her role as a "pioneer of the art form," as one who had "develop[ed] a mature form of presentation which addresses [itself] to larger audiences." Like his colleagues Wexler and Boucher, as programmers with relatively large-scale theaters, all agreed that an important advantage of Laurin's aesthetic was her ability to interest a wide range of spectators. They were, I am quite certain, implying that Laurin's dances have proven to be more popular in their appeal than those of some other contemporary artists of her kind and so successful at the box office. (I-WH)

### 8.6.2 Presenters' gaze: personal assessment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase

But what did they think personally about the *Luna* choreography? These were four of the presenters who had decided to take the risk of presenting *Luna* when still an untested new work even before it was created. Their critiques, elaborated below, were generally positive with an occasional touch of reserve. (Presenters of the later tours had already been able to see the finished work in a performance or showcase before committing to its presentation.)

Wexler confided to me that he was "really responding to [*Luna*] as one of the first artistic works that [he] had witnessed after the terrorist attacks." In the end, he found the piece to be beautiful and compelling, possessing in general a "beautiful quality." He extolled the strong points of its moon theme and technical innovations:

[...] when you think about the moon, and how it is a universal image [...] it was unifying, and really brought people together. It was a beautiful [musical] score [...] the dancers were excellent and provided a lot of their own vocals [...] and it had some wonderful technical effects that were compelling. The video projections from hand-held cameras, and cameras that were hidden in different places on and off the stage, were very interesting to see. (I-MW)

He told me that he had been deeply moved and his agitated spirit soothed along with his audience.

Despite her "crazy mental state" during the *Festival de nouvelle danse de Montréal* "in which *Luna* was presented, because of the agitation issuing from the terrorist attacks, Boucher was able to offer me a few impressions about the



work. But her memories of the work came mainly from the earlier *CINARS* showcase. The dancers were good, she said, and with *Luna* the choreographer was renewing her way of working (*sa démarche*) with an interest in new things. As always, Laurin had given her choreography a "strong structure," beautiful décor and costumes. Some of the images she saw in the work had "stayed with her," such as those created by elements of the set and the video projections, and the large white dresses. Concluding her assessment of *Luna*, Boucher said that all in all "it was a good piece." (I-DB)

Schwarz seemed a little less enthusiastic than the others, perhaps even a little disappointed. He spoke mainly about *Luna's* complexity, the large lenses, and an emotional coolness he had sensed in comparison to her previous works. As did Boucher, he also commented on the rigor of the compositional structure. But in the end he gave *Luna* a mixed assessment:

I cannot be very detailed, but what I felt is that *Luna* is a very elaborated choreography, really in terms of composition and vocabulary, movement in space. I think it's a very well made piece – more in the craft sense. And also the idea with the lenses is a very nice idea. It [works] quite well visually [...] I was not so much taken like I was in a previous production like *The Beast Within*, which was more energetic, dynamic and touching. [...] *Luna* is not wild. It's very accurate, precise, composed and constructed. (I-SS)

His colleague Heun knew the choreography more deeply and intimately, having flown to Montréal from Munich to dialogue with Laurin and Lagacé at length and to watch an in-studio creative session in fall 2000. Heun's reactions to the piece were enthusiastic and complimentary. His analysis offered new insights into some of the virtues of *Luna*. Where some of the other presenters perceived only precision and rigor in the structural form of

*Luna*, Heun sensed sensuality and imaginative poetry. He also said he was enchanted by the use of large lenses that he claimed offered nothing less innovative than “a new world of perception” for spectators:

Luna is a great show! The way in which video projections and these optical lenses are integrated into a dance performance is very new and at the same time it makes great sense/sensuality. By enlarging parts of the body temporarily it draws the attention of the audience towards smaller details of the choreography, thus [sensitizing] the audience [to] the sensations that dancers have between themselves while dancing. It offers a new world of perception for the audience without being didactic. What I like is that Ginette is integrating these techniques in a very poetic way. *Luna* is a dance poem and the technique is not being used for its own sake. It adds another category of imagination to the piece.  
(I-WH)

So many factors then intervened in presenters' choices of dance companies to be programmed. Not only had they honed personal artistic criteria, but they had considered the tastes of their audiences, the nature of the physical and administrative characteristics of their theatrical venues, and of course local arts policies and politics which determined the economic and aesthetic parameters of their operations.

#### 8.7 What meanings and values the critics (and historian) attributed to *Luna*

Among the artifacts I collected, in chronological order were 41 newspaper and magazine articles, previews and reviews, written about the *Luna* performance and choreography of which the first 21 are submitted here

to interpretation (see the list of articles just following the bibliography). These texts were conceived (with a few exceptions) by dance specialists, and my collection spanned the period from the first five opening night critiques about the Lucern premiere on February 2, 2001 to an interview with Laurin in a Canadian dance magazine an October 2002 issue just as she embarked on her tour around the province of Québec. For the interpretations below, I decided to end with the Scottish performances, from a sense that a point of saturation had been reached. This section presents the sole case of *Luna* participants included in this study who I didn't actually meet in person and for whom the only evidence was their writing, but for the two Québécoise who were interviewed as well.

These texts were conceived on, for and about the occasion of dance performances like *Luna*. I believe they are worthwhile examining here because of their impact on public perception and also because they are rich with aesthetic points of view about *Luna's* meanings, and artistic merits and failings. These press and magazine articles were inevitably read by some of the audience members, as was made evident in the focus groups. A selection of these texts were also added to *O Vertigo's* press kit, to be read later by other dance specialists such as dance critics, researchers and students, but also by funding agents and peer jury members as part of the materials offered for judging a grant application to make future work. And so from my dance world experiences in all of these roles, I can predict with certainty that the evaluations and opinions of these specialist dance writers then would have an impact on the meaning and value of *Luna* not only for those spectators who chose to read them before and after the performance, but also in determining the status of *Luna* for dance funders, juries, historians, students, and more.

Two of the dance writers included here were in fact interviewed, and some of their dance views have already been revealed the previous chapter (Howe-Beck, Brody). And I have also had the chance to converse with three

of the others over the years, gleaning a sense of how they apprehend and interpret dance (Schmidt, Jowitt, Kisselgoff).

It was also interesting to note how some of the key ideas and phrases from Laurin and Morgenthelar's original project proposal became inscribed into the company press release for *Luna* (both in Appendix I), and were carried on into the texts of these dance writers directly or paraphrased – sometimes even forming the basis for their descriptions and interpretations. Among others, key words and phrases that appeared in the project proposal and reappeared in the specialists' writings about *Luna* were: "poetic and sensual," "tribute to the human body," "optical technology," "moonlike," "fluid and crystalline," "reveal the hidden face of the dance," "subtle expressions of the dancer's faces," "isolation of parts of the body," "infinitely small and large," "daydreams," "the landscape of the dancers' bodies." Some of the writers even integrated elements of Laurin's statement from the press kit about "vertigo" as they discussed the company's artistic vision in general:

My dance is about vertigo, the allure of the abyss, exhilaration, free-falling emotion. (Ginette Laurin, from the first page of the *Luna* press kit).

I have examined the 21 texts in chronological and geographical order, exploring the idea that there may be commonalities having to do with specific performances of *Luna* and with a kind of national and linguistic kinship among dance writers in the same region.

#### 8.7.1 Swiss and German critics

There were five reviews from dance critics in Swiss newspapers on the day after the premiere performance of *Luna* in Lucerne. They were soon

followed by four German critiques, one written about the Swiss premiere (but published a week later) and the others from the following performances in Düsseldorf.

This group of texts revealed several commonalities. They were all written in the German language, either the literary High German or in Swiss German. They all contained poetic descriptions and interpretations of *Luna's* themes, of its dancers and the dancing. These were poetic texts in the sense that sense-laden adjectives and adverbs colored the writers' observations and interpretations. There were also fragments of vivid movement descriptions, a generous use of imaginative metaphors and impressions about the dancing. Excerpts from Bucher's and Touwborst's sensual and kinetic interpretations offer a small sampling:

Again and again the stage seemed to be in a wide, peaceful cosmos. [...] Actually the dynamic and interwoven movements seem to follow their own laws. [...] While the dancers investigate every step, every rotation, every link of the body gently and playfully – as if they were miraculous – they seem to be goblins, who have slipped into a human body in order to discover it with pleasure.<sup>xxvi</sup> (Bucher, 2001)

Nine moonstrucken ones move in beautiful, pale light. [...] Behind a gauze curtain, which separates the stage elliptically, the movement becomes blurred, synchronously doubled. Cool, reserved and precise, the women and men carry out their quick and small motions like a minimal dance. Their rhythmic breath underlies the sound score, their hands vibrate, pirouettes and hopping jumps try to suggest weightlessness. The gestural communication allows them to appear like extraterrestrials. A

starlit, atmospheric, misty moonlight choreography.<sup>xxvii</sup>  
(Trouwborst, 2001)

American critics (like Jowitt and Kisselgoff below) have named this tendency "the descriptive school" of dance criticism in which there is an attempt to help readers actually visualize what the performance looked like. Shusterman (2002) wrote about a "descriptivist" approach to criticism in which the writer either claims to be describing the dance objectively "as it really was" or as subjectively "s/he saw it." In this kind of writing, as with ethnography, there was also an attitude of immediacy, in other words "I was there and here is what I observed about what people said and did."

The German language critics also seemed to share a common set of criteria and preoccupations about what composes "good quality" (and so valuable) choreography. Woven into their descriptions were evaluative adjectives and phrases such as: well-done, virtuoso, fascinating, magical, weak, marvelous, paralyzing, not very well trained, monotonous, visionary. In this sense they fall into Shusterman's prescriptivist critical attitude as well, because recommending to readers how they should be looking at and evaluating the choreography. For instance, several commented on *Luna* as conceptualist (idea-based) "dance research" -- a current topic of interest in European contemporary dance -- because the work was seen to be posing questions about the body and technology. All of them discussed the virtues of *Luna*'s "dramaturgy" (a German initiated dance concept referring to dramatic flow and structure of choreography) and invariably found that *Luna* was lacking the attention of a dramaturg. It had weak points, they explained, where the action became boring and tedious. And they said that *Luna* was generally too long at seventy minutes with no intermission. But for Schmidt (2001), who judged that some of the dancers were overweight and under-skilled, these critics spoke of the dance, dancers and dancing as beautiful, strong and of high quality -- and so a dance to be treasured. They also called



*Luna* a high point in their local dance season. They described in detail various moments and aspects of the choreography and how it was supported (well or poorly) by other artistic media. They tended to put *Luna* into an art historical framework, making references and comparisons to other artists' work, for instance there were these comments from Blaser: "[It was] reminiscent of the aristocratic painting by Velazquez [...]" and "The light play on the stage floor reminds us of a curved and beautiful moon landscape, how *Le Petit Prince de l'Exupéry* might have experienced it" <sup>xxviii</sup> (Blaser, 2002). Each German language critic offered a personal and distinct interpretation of the choreography's possible meanings, usually beginning with a statement about the significance of the moon. Bucher (2002) claimed *Luna* to be about intellectual "body questions" and defined the body in *Luna* (in tune with Laurin's statements) as a landscape to be discovered; Blaser (2001) experienced *Luna* as a magical and fascinating space that inspires the audience; while Weber (2001) claimed that despite its stated intention to study the body through cameras, *Luna* was in the end really just a beautiful entertaining dance which celebrated the moon; and so on.

Finally, the Swiss and German dance critics almost always included local and nationalist contexts in their texts. They made references to *Luna* as a particular example of Canadian choreography and discussed the presentation of *O Vertigo* within the dance seasons of *lucerntheater* and *Tanzhaus*. In the case of the opening night reviews for the Lucern performance, five of the six dance writers told readers that their resident choreographer Rickard Wherlock had regretfully left Lucern for Berlin with some of his dancers, and the Theatre of Lucern decided not to engage a new ballet company but, as Schmidt put it, decided to try out a new model drafted by Munich impresario Walter Heun (Schmidt, 2001). In this new arrangement, as they told readers, Heun had converted the dance program into the *Choreographisches Zentrum* which offers their audiences guest performances as well as co-productions with national and international dance companies. The three German critics

who wrote about the performances at *Tanzhaus NRW* in Düsseldorf situated *O Vertigo* as of Canadian nationality at the beginning of their texts, and Trouwborst (2001) even described how the Canadian ambassador flew in from Berlin for the premiere performance and so the dance company “is considered to be the Franco-Canadian export number one”<sup>xix</sup> (Trouwborst, 2001). At least in the view of one Canadian diplomat and a German dance critic, *O Vertigo* is truly a national treasure.

### 8.7.2 Montréal hometown critics and dance historian

The four Montréal critics who wrote about *Luna*, having been natives to the home city of *O Vertigo*, had been watching Laurin’s work over the years and in at least one case (Howe-Beck) from the time of her first choreographic efforts. Montréal dance writers Brody and Howe-Beck were interviewed and profiled for this study. Two of the newspaper articles concerned the performance of a 10-minute excerpt of *Luna* presented by the Montréal Highlights Festival as one section of a larger showcase of 8 local dance companies, called “Montréal Mène La Danse,” on February 24, 2001. The other three critiques were written following the two performances of the complete choreography at the *Montréal Festival International de Nouvelle Danse* on September 22 and 23, 2001.

Martin (2001) and Brody (2001) wrote “survey” texts about this program of excerpts from 8 Montréal dance companies. From personal conversations with the directors, I know that the Montréal Highlights Festival was conceived as a cultural event in the middle of winter whose purpose was mainly to help draw more tourists into the city during the low season for tourism, by way of vaunting and popularizing both Montréal arts and cuisine. Both critics set their interpretations in the framework of the presentation with general discussion about Montréal choreography. Martin (2001) remarked

that the thematic program of local dance demonstrated that Montréal dance was in "top form" and reflected the kind of creative diversity that is the fruit of freedom of expression, while Brody (2001) praised it as a good survey of local dance "universes" (styles), but that it was only the "tip of the iceberg" of local dance production. With only enough space to characterize the short *Luna* excerpt in a few words, Martin summarized it as lyric and savage, while Brody ventured a few lines of description: "[...] a series of 'flashes' in which the dancers speak to us through a strange sign language, playful and jittery." Martin is an aesthetic philosopher who attempted in her text to identify some common characteristics of Montréal dances which she identified as displaying vitality, strong bodies in motion, powerful dancing and charisma, quick and sometimes explosive movement, a love for choreographic complexity, and stylistic originality. Brody and Martin's capsule previews of *Luna* were purely descriptive, as in Shusterman's "true meaning of descriptivist logic," reserving further assessments and interpretations for the fall premiere of the full-length work.

Howe-Beck (2001) wrote a preview on the morning of the first performance of *Luna* at the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*. She offered a terse explanation of the "Grand Labo" theme, chosen for the festival by its director Chantal Pontbriand, as a "huge laboratory." With only the space of a single paragraph in which to delineate the features of *Luna* before seeing the live work, she simply quoted a few sections from the company press release with an emphasis on the use of optical lenses to reveal details of body mechanics. Along with the accompanying photo of Demers and Riede dancing behind one of the giant lenses, Howe-Beck's article suggested that the use of giant lenses was the central idea of the choreography, when actually it was one small part of the dance among others.

The two *Luna* performances at the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal* received substantial critical reviews from Brody (2001) and Poulin (2001), each one written immediately after one of the presentations and on the

same evening. Brody confided to me in a personal conversation (on January 21, 2005) that she had to write in this fashion during festivals, turning out a text in a hurry as if "in a single stroke" within one hour on a deadline for the *La Presse* daily newspaper and so affording her little time to mature her impressions. Both Brody and Poulin wrote with literary flair, in that they used evocative adjectives, adverbs, imagery and metaphors in their descriptions and evaluations of *Luna*. I am thinking here of richly endowed phrases like Poulin's: "[...] these women carrying illusions who take over the stage with their white skirts puffed up with giant crinolines"<sup>xxx</sup> and Brody's "Exulting life, the dancers throw themselves into a veritable frenzy of gestures, punctuated by an almost violent contact of body on body"<sup>xxxi</sup>. Their writing was poetic and clearly personal, giving them the status of subjective descriptivists within Shusterman's schema of critic's attitudes (2002).

Brody and Poulin's *Luna* reviews contained several points of agreement: the dance's ambiance was magical and dream-like, the dancers' powerful interpretations were of primary interest, the pacing of the dance was exceptionally rapid, the public was pulled strongly into the action, and the dream-like qualities of the dance were wonderfully augmented by the sections with the large lenses, the silky moon dresses, and the camera hidden under Barry's skirt. Both described the audience's reaction as one of spontaneous enthusiasm, in Brody's words: "the public stood up at the end in one single bound. The ovation was spontaneous and complete (I-SB)."<sup>xxxi</sup>

It was in the prescriptivist interpretations they gave of the dance's meanings that Brody and Poulin's views differed with subtlety. Brody proposed by way of explanation that it seemed as if "a kind of enchanter blew life into the dancers. [...] Their entire bodies served to communicate among themselves in an unknown language that we can never truly understand and which envelops *Luna* in an aura of mystery"<sup>xxxi</sup>. In her interpretation, the dance was about what happened to the dancers and the strange choreographic world in which they interacted. In contrast, Poulin began her

review by pinning down a single master theme, which also served as a caption for the photo, included in the article, of Barry in the silky moon dress: "*Luna* is an exploration of the body of the dancer, a microcosm of the universe."<sup>xodiv</sup> In Poulin's explanation, the dancers' "bodily landscape" served as a metaphor for the nature of the universe. It occurs to me that this is an interesting variation on the classical ballet's historical function as a choreographic representation of the ordering of the universe through the configuration of bodies moving through space.

Included in this section on local dance writers is the sole newspaper article from the Chicoutimi tour, a preview written by Pelletier (2001). This is the performance at the *Théâtre du Saguenay*, described throughout this study. An entire half-page of space was reserved in the local paper, and three photos were included. Pelletier devoted most of her text to a history of *O Vertigo*, and an entire column of descriptive prose about the *Luna* choreography that she had culled from the press release. Assuming the role of prescriptivist arts advocate (as did also Chicoutimi *animatrice* Clément), her article reminded local theater-goers that *O Vertigo* was a note worthy company, having been regularly invited to the *Théâtre du Saguenay* over the years, and furthermore, that it was a prestigious company. She then rallied Saguenay audiences to the performance with a rousing prescriptivist sentence: "Ginette Laurin is reputed for her way of integrating and unifying movements, costumes, music and lights and for inventing original concepts [...] that are vibrant, sensual, energetic and which touch both the heart and the spirit"<sup>xoxv</sup> (Pelletier, 2001).

Finally, although she didn't write or publish a text specifically about *Luna*, Montréal dance historian Tembeck did have a few words to say in interview about the presentation of *Luna* she had attended during the *Festival international de nouvelle danse*. She remarked how it was that, for her, the context of a performance imposes subjective interpretations. As if to illustrate, Tembeck described how *Luna* had seemed a respite from the intensity of a

dance festival and the recent terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in New York City:

I found [*Luna*] ...a bit contemplative. I found it ...peaceful. And I think it's a piece that I enjoyed seeing after September 11<sup>th</sup>. [...] There was in our daily lives, so much...violence, anxiety, disruption of world order, that seeing something that was more meditative, within the compressed thing of a three-week festival...(sighs with relief) Aaaahhh! You see? So it depends how you go to a piece, if you've come at the end of the last of a busy week. You know there are so many things that subjectively come into the way you see something. (I-IT)

She explained that the way in which she interpreted a performance also depended on whether she was watching in order to write, or with the intention of talking about it in a class (university level dance history). And she also remarked that how she experiences a dance work also depended literally on her angle of view ("sightlines") and the space in which it was being shown. Her assessment of *Luna* was succinct: "I liked it [...] I liked the staging of it," but then critiqued the use of technology as a trendy choice and the dance as overly long despite the striking images. When asked if she still considered Laurin a key choreographer, she mused "I think so [but] she's now catering to a broader public internationally," and mourned the loss of the intimate humor in her earlier duet work *Olé*. (I-IT)

### 8.7.3 New York City critics

Deborah Jowitt and Anna Kisselgoff are two senior dance critics in New York City who wrote reviews of *Luna* performances at The Joyce



Theater. Each has been writing for over 25 years on a weekly basis respectively in the *Village Voice* "alternative press" weekly newspaper and the daily newspaper *The New York Times*. They both see themselves as part of an American "descriptive school" of dance writing in which reviewers attempt to recreate the moment of a dance performance including both stage action and audience reactions. Jowitt has also written a book that moves beyond purely aiming to describe, and which attempts the work of a historian and sociologist in that it situates art dances in their historical settings (Jowitt, 1988).

In my close readings of New York City critics over the years, in *The New York Times* and *The Village Voice*, I have often remarked that, perhaps more than any other group of dance writers, they seem to be interested in and excel at making minute and visceral descriptions of the dance movements themselves. By way of example, consider these depictions of dance movement from reviews of *Luna* reviews: "[...] they accumulate and accelerate sequences of knock-kneed pliés, taps to the chest, squats turned into handstands, mouths pulled into smiles and so on, along with more expansive yanks and lifts with partners [...]" from Kisselgoff (2001); and "Dancers tangle playfully, but just as often unite in crystalline patterns of big, smooth steps or stand and transmit cryptic hand signals" from Jowitt (2001). Both dance writers had also seen previous works of Laurin, and so offered historical perspectives on the evolution of her characteristic aesthetic. Jowitt proposed that *Luna* "is less explosive than her earliest pieces [...] a dreamier world." Kisselgoff reflected that Laurin's "old, daring acrobatic flourish has been replaced by an astounding concentration on small detail in gestures and isolated movements" and that although she "has always excelled in expressing fantasy through the physicality of dance technique, [...] here she relies more on technology."

Both critics centered their seasoned prescriptivist interpretations of choreographic meaning on the co-habitation of science and fantasy, echoing Laurin's statements about her work in the press release (Appendix I). Jowitt

advanced her view that “in this [choreographic] universe, science and imagination embrace [...in a] mood of serene exploration.” Kisselgoff proposed a more elaborate interpretation. She wrote: “ ‘Luna’ is a cross between a fairy tale and a scientific treatise,” adding that when it was considered as a story “ ‘Luna’ is less an allegory about the universe than a minute examination of matter, and matter in this case is dancing.” As for the fiery ending of the dance, Kisselgoff suggested that it might be seen either as apocalyptic or then again perhaps as representing “the chaotic turbulence of creation.” At several points, each critic also made subtle value judgments revealing some of their aesthetic preferences, agreeing that (as Jowitt wrote) the dance was “full of beauties” but that it sometimes became tedious. Jowitt also noted approvingly the presence of lightness and buoyancy, splendid dancers, and eloquent lighting (her own words). In a more doubtful tone Kisselgoff called the work sophisticated and imaginative, but that the 75 minutes of dancing were not adequately sustained by enough inventiveness and were lacking in “a deeper dimension.” In a similar fashion to their German colleagues above, they looked closely at the intelligence of the subject matter, whether or not the work was truly an aesthetic innovation, and if the dramatic structure was able to sustain the audience’s interest.

Jowitt and Kisselgoff fall most clearly into Shusterman’s subjective descriptivist genre (Shusterman, 2002), with a tendency to prescribe specific understandings for readers in a prescriptivist vein. To my mind, their writing assumed an attitude of “while I was sitting there watching *Luna* the other night and I noticed that...” in which the dance writer is situated as a particular kind of audience member reacting to a specific performance.

#### 8.7.4 Scottish interviewers and critics

I was no longer doing fieldwork when *O Vertigo* toured *Luna* to Glasgow, Scotland, but continued to collect previews and reviews. And so I

recuperated traces of their performances as part of the *New Territories* Festival, where they performed in the company of another Québécois dance company *Sylvain Émard Danse*, by way of five newspaper articles. Among them were two previews composed of ideas offered in the press materials but also, in the case of Bowen (2002), from interviews he made with Laurin and Émard. Following public performances of *Luna* in Glasgow on March 15 and 16, 2001, three other Scottish dance critics wrote reviews: Mary Brennan (2002), Alice Bain (2002) and Mark Bowen (2002).

The previews contained information about the *New Territories* dance festival context, the choreographer, the dance company, the themes and style of *Luna*. Bowen gave his prescriptivist text a cultural slant at the outset, by discussing the ethnicity of the two Québécois choreographies. He began his article with a political insight on Québécois dance, perhaps a reflection of Scotland's own struggle for cultural autonomy within the hegemony of Great Britain:

The Canadian province of Québec is a society that has fought hard – and continues to fight – to maintain its language and identity within North America. It seems ironic, therefore, that this predominantly French-speaking community's most prominent cultural export (Céline Dion apart) is distinctly non-verbal.  
(Bowen, 2002)

Quoting from his interviews with Émard and Laurin, Bowen offered further historical insights about how Québécois dance had (at least according to these two choreographers) so little ballet and modern dance heritage that local dancers had been obliged to invent their own style in isolation.<sup>4</sup> Laurin was quoted as she voiced the common belief, shared by many Montréal dancers,

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<sup>4</sup> This cherished local myth has long been challenged by Tembeck's research and her writings on the history of dance in Montréal, especially in 1988 and 1991.

that the intense physicality of the Montréal style has been in part the result of the fact that "we're more Latin. We love physical thrills. We drive faster than other Canadians" (Bowen, 2001). Bowen remarked that since *O Vertigo's* Scottish debut in 1993, the company's work had been recognized in Scotland as "explosive and dynamic." In this preview, Laurin confirmed that her work was indeed taking a new turn with *Luna*, to her mind becoming more quiet, fragile and introspective than previous works. Chadwick's preview (2001) limited itself to a few descriptive paragraphs about the choreography and Laurin's creative sources, gleaned from the press materials. He assumed the role of arts advocate. His writing tone aimed to rouse the audience's enthusiasm with adjectives like "suspense-filled" and "explosive", and his article ended with a reassurance to the public of the choreography's quality and value: "Luna is sure to be a tidy ball placed firmly in the audience's court" (Chadwick, 2001).

Two of the three post-performance reviews began on a note of skepticism, with Bain (2001) contending that *Luna* "seems at first sight a little old-fashioned" and Brown (2001) portraying the opening scenes as cool and clinical, "reminiscent of a hospital respirator." But all reported that in the end they became convinced of *Luna's* quality because of the beauty of the visuals, high caliber of the dancers and dynamic (and so exciting) movement. Like the New York City critics, their critiques were composed of literary descriptions of the stage action into which they embedded their interpretations and evaluations of the choreographic composition. In the end, for instance, Brennan (2002) gave *Luna* a positive assessment, telling her readers that the choreography was "a kind of beguiling alchemy [...] fusing scientific text with processional hymn."

### 8.8. When does the *Luna* choreography “work”?

Often overheard during fieldwork was the concept that the *Luna* choreography was “working” or “not working” (expressed by the verb *fonctionner* when in French). What did participants mean when they used the term? Like other contemporary choreographies, the current-day aesthetic climate in Montréal contemporary dance is one of individualistic experimentation and the forging of an original personal movement style (*une danse signée* in French, as if a signature). Local choreographers are under the influence of many differing schools of artistic thought: expressionism, Automatism, the integration of new technologies, neo-conceptualism based in the study of the body, and so on. So with no single set of artistic criteria, how and when can a dance be said to be working or not?

Early on in the fieldwork process I began to wonder why it was that a certain movement or image seem to ‘work’ for someone. I asked myself, for instance, what aesthetic criteria had led Laurin to decide that at various points in the creative process that the choreography “was working.” This seemed to me a question about meaning, for the choreographers and dancers and ultimately for audiences. I reasoned that “work” could be thought of as both a noun and a verb (FN: 9-13-00). These first thoughts continued to develop in my mind as months went on, as I heard different kinds of participants use the term “it works” on various of occasions. My thoughts were also tempered by advice from thesis co-director Sylvie Fortin when she cautioned that the idea that a choreography works or doesn’t (she used the French *fonctionne*) was not the same as it being meaningful (in the French sense of *être significatif*). But I asked myself, doesn’t the choreography ‘function’ when it is meaningful and communicates to its proponents? Most confusing of all, everyone in the study had a different angle of view on what it meant for *Luna* to be ‘working’ “ (FN: 12-16-00).

In the end, the meaning and use of the term "work" varied for each participant, dependant on personal criteria, artistic ethos and role in the dance event. What did become clear: when *Luna* worked well in someone's view, it was in the general sense of having attained quality, value and artistic integrity. And some were also referring to the idea that the dance worked when it seemed to be "complete" and replete with the power to evoke multiple meanings.

Laurin was frequently heard to exclaim (or sometimes quietly confirm as she gave notes for instance) "yes, that works, keep it!" (*oui, ça fonctionne, gardez-le!*) during the creative processes, referring to either the technical and/or interpretive mastery of her dancers, or to her intuitive sense of "choreographic rightness" in movement choices according to the kinds of aesthetic preferences she revealed in giving notes to the dancers (clarity, sharpness, and so on).

As for Lagacé, he expressed his opinion at one point before opening night (during the filming session) that the *Luna* choreography would begin to "work better" once the dancers were able to integrate the choreography more fully into their bodies: "I'm confident, but it is still a bit mechanical. The dancers haven't yet completely integrated it." (FN: 8-8-01).

On the other hand, Morgenthelar and the other artistic collaborators were more concerned with how to negotiate and interject the material they had proposed to Laurin in the framework of a delicate union of aesthetic sensibilities. For instance, one day Morgenthelar projected a rapid stream of film fragments (fire, stars, waves, etc.) on a moon skirt, and for each image Laurin made quick choices, saying to Morgenthelar "that one works" or "that one doesn't."

In yet another sense, the presenters, writers and funding agents had each developed a specific and personal set of criteria, often conflicting with one another as seen above, which they applied when weighing various elements of *Luna* they had judged as "working more or less well." Most wrote



that the dancers were strong and dynamic, but one felt they were overweight and under-trained; some found the choreography emotionally reserved and overlong to its detriment, while others perceived it as passionate and even thrilling; and so on. To judge whether the dance was working or not from these specialists' points of view was a decision about the relative value and quality of this dance work in light of Laurin's previous works, their own criteria honed over the years, and specific art world standards to which they subscribed.

## 8.9 Conclusion

It bears repeating that no single authoritative interpretation of *Luna's* form, function and meaning was found in the data. What did emerge from this account of participants' perceptions, interpretations and evaluations was a striking diversity of aesthetic points of view, assessments and personal meanings. As Laurin and some of her artistic collaborators explained above (I-GL1, I-AM, I-DL), this contemporary choreography was intentionally conceived according to Automatist conventions to be an abstract, poetic form that was open to various interpretations. In the end, all participants articulated some kind of meaning they had found in the *Luna* performance.

Although no common understanding emerged from the data, the choreographer's title *Luna* and project proposal text (Appendix I) provided motifs that contributed to the interpretations of participants. For instance, certain general themes and ideas from these sources reappeared throughout the interviews and focus groups: aspects of the moon, stars and universe, the primacy of the unconscious, the interface of art and science, looking closely at dancers' bodies, the poetry of the form and the physicality of the aesthetic, and the use of new technologies in dance. More specifically, sites of

consensus about interpretive modes and meanings were apparent within specific participant groups.

Members of *O Vertigo* were dance milieu professionals whose full-time engagement in the event gave them ample occasion to formulate interpretations of *Luna*. There were shared understandings, for instance, between Laurin and her artistic collaborators Morgenthelar and Lavoie that intuition and abstraction were key components of the *Luna* aesthetic and that *Luna* represented an "astral universe" open to multiple meanings (I-GL1, I-AM, I-DL). The dancers and rehearsal director voiced a common set of concepts, proposed by the choreographer, such as the cultivation of their inner garden and the inner smile, the idea of creating a presence or energy as they dance, the imperative to find their own interpretations by way of the intense physicality of the movements. Through these choreographic conventions specific to Laurin's way of working, and their own aesthetic views, each dancer had formulated an essential metaphor (or two) with which to motivate their dancing: Reide's energies, Barry's presence, Weikart's imaginary kernel, Rodrigue's connection to the universe, and so on. The company directors, staff and agents who were engaged in mounting and promoting *Luna*, but whose work was not to interpret or assess the dance, offered only brief critiques and interpretations: Lagagé called it "rich, full and enigmatic" (I-BL) and Proulx recounted how it was emotionally moving for him and "close to the dancers and to humanity" (I-JP).

*Luna's* spectators sat in still and quiet contemplation of the dancing, as contemporary dance decorum dictates, devoting only a few hours of their lives to the task of perception and interpretation during their evening out to the dance. The range of interpretations that 22 audience members expressed in the course of focus groups were discussed above in terms of three modes of apprehension and interpretation: (a) rational; (b) emotional and sensorial; and (c) intuitive. In other words, in order to formulate their reactions they alternately perceived *Luna* as a poetic kind of language, an emotional or

visceral experience or as a way of tapping into their subconscious imagination. They seized both general impressions of their 75-minute experience of *Luna*, and spoke about specific associations, sensations and emotions they had gleaned from specific moments in the choreography. As the focus groups revealed, most of these audience members had come to the performance with enough knowledge of contemporary dance to realize that no single interpretation or comprehensive narrative would be available.

The expressive specialists, like the dance company members, were dance milieu professionals. It was part of their role to assess and interpret *Luna* for audiences, artists and the population at large. In this chapter, the four presenters and 21 dance writers who were interviewed articulated precise and often elaborate meanings and critiques of *Luna*. The dance presenters were among those who had chosen to include *Luna* in their season, having already determined that *Luna* would be beneficial in their local seasons. They watched from the imagined perspective of their audience members and also from a personal point of view. All agreed that this choreography marked a more abstract and technological direction for Laurin, that the work was complex and tightly structured. And all presenters but Schwartz, who felt *Luna* was lacking in the emotional intensity he had expected to find, extolled the virtues of its beauty, poetry, inventiveness and the strong skillful dancing.

With few exceptions, the writers in this study were all newspaper journalists and critics, and radio hosts, who were specialists in dance. By presenting them chronologically and by nationality, it was possible to identify certain characteristics of "schools of critical thought" that formed a consensus about critical approach and writing style, as well as pinpointing the differences among their personal interpretations. They undertook various descriptive, interpretive and literary tasks in the course of their writing, from venturing to explain the meaning of *Luna's* movements to assessing the quality of the performers. Although most extolled the quality and other

virtues of *O Vertigo* and *Luna*, there were some dissenting negative comments.

What finally became evident from this multitude of viewpoints, sometimes contradictory, is how interpretation and evaluation functioned for the *Luna* event in an intersubjective web of relationships. Each participant found sense in the performance through a strategic mode of interpretation they had developed in their lives over time, and according to his or her role in the event and general aesthetic outlook.

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The original French texts

<sup>i</sup> "Je n'aime pas trop analyser et comprendre. C'est certain qu'il y a un sens, mais il va peut-être être différent d'une personne à l'autre. Il y a une esthétique, mais je travaille un peu dans le non-dit. Quand j'explique les choses aux danseurs et que je leur dis ce que je cherche, je ne pense pas que ma façon d'aborder le sujet est comme en théâtre, par exemple, où on est beaucoup défini avec le personnage, avec le sens, la signification, la psychologie du personnage. Pour moi, c'est beaucoup plus important d'y aller intuitivement et que le danseur reste aussi très intuitif dans sa démarche. Et, je fais référence parfois à des aspects plus visuels ou descriptifs, ou qui font référence à l'atmosphère ou à l'environnement. Pour moi, Luna, c'était l'idée des astres, la différence entre l'infiniment grand et infiniment petit, les éléments d'optique qu'on a utilisés qui nous ramènent à Copernic qui étudiait les planètes avec ses verres, au temps futur où on va toujours se soucier de l'environnement de l'univers. Et c'est un environnement très complexe, qu'on cherche encore à comprendre. La lune aussi pour toute sa portée poétique. Alors, tu vois, ce sont des images que je suggère, comme je pense que j'en suggère aussi dans le spectacle. Pour moi, il y a des milliers de sens. Chaque spectateur peut lire ce qu'il veut lire. C'est important de conserver cette multitude..." Ginette Laurin

<sup>ii</sup> "Là elle est arrivée à quelque chose de plus astral, alors c'est un peu...ça laisse beaucoup plus de place pour les images, pour le public, pour nous qui regardons la pièce. Et ça pour moi, d'avoir ce degré d'ouverture-là dans une oeuvre c'est bien parce qu'on va vers quelque chose de plus grand, de plus fort." Denis Lavoie

<sup>iii</sup> "[Luna] s'est fait rapidement comme la plupart des pièces de Ginette. Puis après ça avec beaucoup, beaucoup de temps pour aller chercher l'essentiel." Raymond Brisson

<sup>iv</sup> "Je ne veux pas bouger, je veux danser. Juste exécuter les mouvements ce n'est pas suffisant. Ça me prend quelque chose derrière ça et derrière la pièce dans son intégralité. Ça me prend une ligne directrice. J'ai besoin de savoir pourquoi je fais un mouvement, même si ce n'est pas raisonné. Souvent en danse c'est comme ça que ça se passe, on le sent ou on ne le sent pas et j'ai besoin de sentir." Kha Nguyen

<sup>v</sup> "[...] à tous les soirs je regarde la lune. Ça me parle. Je sais que pour Ginette, ce n'est pas vraiment le côté mythe de la lune qui l'intéresse, mais moi ça me nourrit, je me sers de ça parce que je trouve ça magnifique, merveilleux la lune, c'est un astre qui me parle." Patrick Lamothe

<sup>vi</sup> "[...] me connecter aux forces universelles, terrestres et cosmiques." Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>vii</sup> "[Il] faut que je le vis, que je le danse, que je le respire et puis tout à coup, ça arrive. C'est pas moi qui l'impose." Marie-Claude Rodrigue

viii "[...] l'histoire de la loupe" et qu' "[elle] me fait beaucoup sentir l'influence qu'ont les astres, les éléments et les saisons sur nous. Ça me fait penser à l'enfantement, l'émerveillement devant la Force de la Vie." Marie-Claude Rodrigue

ix "Il y a des images fortes qui nous amènent dans des mondes un peu plus concrets, je dirais, que dans une certaine abstraction figurative contemporaine." Jocelyn Proulx

\* "J'ai trouvé ça drôle [quand] à la fin du spectacle j'écoutais parler les gens. Ils parlaient de la face cachée de la lune, des affaires que j'ai pas trop comprises. Mais je me suis rendu compte que c'était pas grave parce que chaque personne avait sa propre vision du spectacle et qu'il n'y en avait pas de mauvaise ni de meilleure [vision] qu'une autre. [C'est] parce que chacun voit ça avec ce qu'il est et quelle personne il est. C'est ça l'art! Ça rejoint tout le monde [et] chacun a sa propre vision. On voit selon ce qu'on vit, notre vie. C'est tout." Andréa Simard

xi "La façon dont je comprends [*Luna*] et que ça vient me toucher [c'est] à plusieurs niveaux. Je suis à la fois artistique et scientifique en même temps." Jimmy Simard

xii "[...] il y a une partie qui essaie de comprendre ce que je ressens et ce qui se passe devant moi." Noumbe Diop

xiii "Je ne vous dirai pas tout ce qui m'est passé par la tête ce soir, mais ça touche tout. Ça va jusqu'à la mort, la naissance, plein de détails de la vie." Emma Renaud

xiv "Quand ils font des gestes... À un moment donné ils étaient tous en arrière à faire des gestes répétitifs et je me suis dit : 'tiens, c'est le travail. Ils sont pris dans la vie quotidienne.' On associe... je ne me suis pas forcée... j'ai juste senti à un moment que c'était ça, mais ce n'était pas important. Je ne voulais pas saisir à tout prix. Veux, veux pas... les grandes poupées... à un moment donné tu as aussi d'autres images... la femme mariée. C'était la femme mariée mais c'était aussi l'illusion pour moi. Une fraction de seconde j'ai vu ça. De toute façon on attrape toujours un « flash » quelque part. On est quand même dans la matière. Il y a quand même des objets, les corps sont là. À un moment donné ils étaient tous en beige, puis les t-shirts de couleurs arrivaient et tu vois les choses qui bougent, qui changent. Parfois ils sont juste les hommes, les femmes, déjà il y a autre chose que tu sens. D'avoir le vrai sens, ce n'est pas important... les relations... il y avait le support, le rejet, un peu la bataille, l'amour, la tendresse. C'est important de ressentir ce que les corps expriment aussi. Il faut ressentir quelque chose, on ne peut pas seulement être dans l'abstraction du mouvement." Ginette Logueux

xv "[...] Je crois que je me laisse aller, je me laisse séduire visuellement et ça fait des connexions avec d'autres aspects de mon être et partir de ça il y a des détails, des éléments qui font que je me sens confortable et que j'aime ça. [...]



C'est comme si c'était une extension de moi qui est devant moi." Michel Desnoyers

<sup>xvi</sup> "Mais il y a l'autre pensée qui est la pensée analogique qui est une pensée aussi. C'est la pensée où on fait des associations, c'est par ça qu'on va rejoindre l'émotion et elle a aussi sa rationalité, cette pensée-la. Une chose nous fait penser à telle autre, à telle autre [...]" N. Simard

<sup>xvii</sup> "C'est un génie parce qu'elle maîtrise un langage que très peu de personnes maîtrisent, le langage analogique." N. Simard

<sup>xviii</sup> "On doit s'élever au-dessus [des mouvements] et sentir l'émotion, ressentir ce qui se passe."; "Le code, c'est plutôt l'émotion qui arrive." Eric Potvin

<sup>xix</sup> "[...] un flot d'émotions qui rentre et qui est vécu pour le moment du spectacle." Eric Villeneuve

<sup>xx</sup> "le reflet et le résultat de tensions sociétales, (b) basé sur l'émotivité, l'expression et l'intensité, et (c) dynamique, énergique et il possède de l'immédiateté" (Iro Tembeck)

<sup>xxi</sup> "Ça vient m'imprégner aussi au niveau de la musique, ça me fait vibrer énormément. Il y a beaucoup de musique qui m'a passé à travers le corps ce soir. Tout en regardant l'image je me suis senti quasiment en transe à un moment donné." Jimmy Simard

<sup>xxii</sup> "Dans ce spectacle-ci, j'ai été frappé par [...] ces gestes saccadés et insistants qui revenaient tout le temps. Je me disais 'ils vont nous l'expliquer à un certain moment' et l'explication est venue. C'était comme une glorification du langage sourd-muet. C'était génial parce que c'est des gestes que les sourds-muets font. C'est un langage qui n'est pas parlé et qu'une chorégraphe prenne ça au vol, c'est génial." Bruno Roy

<sup>xxiii</sup> "Pour ajouter un peu en tant que psychologue, parce qu'on parle beaucoup de rationalité et tout. Pour moi, la créativité, on est obligé d'étudier ça avec beaucoup de rationalité. [...] Ce qu'on a besoin pour avoir un certain plaisir, c'est de faire des liens rationnels de temps en temps, et ces spectacles-là nous permettent ça." Normand Simard

<sup>xxiv</sup> "[...] pourquoi pas s'initier à autre chose, à voir, à s'ouvrir l'esprit, à s'initier à autre chose de nouveau?" Lorraine Hubert

<sup>xxv</sup> "Je n'ai pas vraiment vu grand chose parce que c'était en plein festival. Oui, mon état mental était un peu fou. [...] je me souviens probablement plus de l'extrait que j'ai vu en studio [...] ce festival-ci, avec le 11 septembre, c'était un peu la folie." Diane Boucher

<sup>xxvi</sup> "Immer wieder scheint die Szeneriezeim welten, friedlichen Kosmos angesiedelt zu sein. [...] Überhaupt scheinen die dynamisch beseelten oder filigran sich verwebenden Bewegungsabfolgen eigenen Gesetzmässigkeiten zu folgen. [...] Während die Tanzenden jeden Schritt, jede Drehung, jedes Gelenk des Körpers sanft und verspielt untersuchen, als seien diese ein

Wunder, wirken sie wie Kobolde, die in einen Menschenkörper geschlüpft sind, um diesen genüsslich zu erkunden..." Eva Bucher

<sup>xxvii</sup> "Neun Mondsüchtige gewegen sich in schönem, fahlen Licht, [...] Hinter einem Gazevorhang, der die Bühne ellipsenförmig teilt, werden die Bewegungen, nunmehr verschwommen, synchron verdoppelt. Kühl, distanziert und präzise führen die Frauen und Männer ihre flindken, kleinen Motionen, die Richtung *minimal dance* gehen, aus. Ihr Atem rhythmisiert den Klangteppich, ihre Hände vibrieren, Pirouetten und gehüpfte Sprünge wollen Schwerelosigkeit suggerieren. Wie Außerirdische lässt sie ihre gestische Kommunikation erscheinen. Eine sternenklare, atmosphärisch neblige Mondschein-Choreografie." Bettina Trouwborst

<sup>xxviii</sup> "Frauen in wolkigen Roben, die an die von Velazquez gemalten Adligen erinnern [...]" Agathe Blaser; "Die Lichtspiele auf dem Bühnenboden erinnern an eine gewölbte, schöne Mondlandschaft, wie sie Saint-Exupéris kleiner Prinz erlebt haben könnte." Eva Bucher

<sup>xxix</sup> "O Vertigo gilt als franko-kanadischer Exportschlager." Bettina Trouwborst

<sup>xxx</sup> "[...] comme ces femmes porteuses d'illusions qui envahiront la scène avec leurs jupes blanches gonflées de crinoline géante." Isabelle Poulin

<sup>xxxi</sup> "Exultants de vie, les danseurs se lancent ensuite dans une véritable frénésie gestuelle, ponctuée de corps à corps presque violents." Stéphanie Brody

<sup>xxxii</sup> "[...] le public s'est levé d'un bond. L'ovation fût spontanée et totale." Stéphanie Brody

<sup>xxxiii</sup> "Une sorte d'enchanteur semble insuffler la vie aux danseurs. [...] Leurs corps tout entiers leur sert à communiquer entre eux dans une langue inconnue que l'on ne saisira vraiment jamais et qui drape *Luna* dans une aura de mystère." Stéphanie Brody

<sup>xxxiv</sup> "Luna est une exploration du corps de l'interprète, microcosme de l'univers." Isabelle Poulin

<sup>xxxv</sup> "Ginette Laurin est réputée pour sa façon d'intégrer et d'unifier mouvements, costumes, musique et éclairages pour inventer des concepts originaux et les mettre en œuvre dans des spectacles vibrants, sensuels, énergiques, qui touchent à fois le cœur et l'esprit." Pelletier

## CONCLUSION:

### MOVING TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE *LUNA* DANCE EVENT AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL PHENOMENON

With her seminal essay (1969/70) on the ethnicity of ballet, I believe that Kealiinohomoku launched a new paradigm for the field of cultural dance studies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the wake of her manifesto, this ethnographic study of *Luna* has examined the form and function of one large-scale contemporary dance event, turning researchers' attention towards the socio-cultural effects of these kinds of contemporary artistic dance practices. In an era of increasing globalization and commodification of the arts and of debates about the survival of the distinct category of art in the Occident, the *Luna* event is situated as an occasion for useful, meaningful, and extra-ordinary activities of a small subculture of Montréalers. This ethnographic study also points to the interest in examining the beliefs and attitudes of those for whom contemporary dance is still unknown, of little significance or even the subject of disapproval, a project beyond the capacity of this study.

In an unexpected turn away from certain presumptions I held about an endangered dance world and desire to advocate for its survival, the *Luna* project revealed a dance practice and artistic company that was highly valued and viable for its practitioners. The métier of professional dancer remains an economically and physically precarious one, and it is still true that few contemporary dance companies have attained the status and stability of *O Vertigo* within society-at-large. But it is clear that contemporary dance in

Montréal is no longer exclusively the marginalized art form of its origins. Although still the province of a small subculture in most societies in which it appears, as in Montréal, its presentation is now a common occurrence in large-scale theaters and festivals in the Occident and beyond. A few companies like *O Vertigo*, are now coveted by a group of arts presenters who cooperate together in increasingly powerful international networks, which Arbour has characterized metaphorically as horizontal movements within contemporary art systems (1999).

Contemporary dance events like *Luna* also mark a shift in thought and action for dance artists and theorists from the notion of unity to that of eclecticism, in the sense of intermixing disparate phenomena and realities. For instance, among the *Luna* dancers, rather than the uniform idealized bodies and movement qualities of classical ballet there was a range of body types and training backgrounds. Discussed more thoroughly in the next section, the *Luna* dance event was marked at every level of its undertaking by mixing among diverse (and previously opposing) socio-cultural phenomenon, from the composition of the dance company and audience to the aesthetics of choreographic composition.

In terms of methodology, the *Luna* dance event framework elaborated through this study provides, I believe, a novel approach for the study of contemporary dance practices. It also ascertains the place of these practices within the field of dance anthropology. As far as I have been able to determine, it is in this study that the traditional dance event framework has for the first time served as a template for examining a contemporary dance event. And the unique standpoint of the dance presenter provides ground for understanding this kind of dance practice by telling its story from the points of views of its various kinds of participants.

This chapter exposes some of the implications of this genre of large-scale, internationalist yet locally identified, and eclectic dance events in two sections: (1) its form, its defining characteristics; (2) its functions, the range

of meanings the event held for its eclectic “aesthetic community.” A third section explores how the dance event perspective has changed my practice of dance presentation, while an epilogue brings to the surface further insights from the premiere performance of the choreographic work following *Luna*.

### 9.1 Form: the contours of the *Luna* event

The *Luna* dance event crystallized a cluster of values, beliefs and practices that characterize an elite group of contemporary dance companies who, like *O Vertigo*, have attained favored status in the dance world and, based on my knowledge, I would even venture at this point to say in society-at-large. Some of the characteristics described below are common to all these companies, while others are indigenous to the unique situation of the *O Vertigo* dance company and the vision of artistic director Laurin. In this section I will discuss these features from (a) historic, (b) socio-cultural, (c) political, (d) economic and (e) aesthetic perspectives. These are, of course, not isolated categories of characteristics but an integrally interconnected matrix of phenomena.

In historical context, this portrait of *Luna* depicts a contemporary dance form that is in a mature phase of development and steadily becoming a global movement. In the case of Montréal, what was once a small band of dance experimentalists who were Laurin’s close colleagues and peers – Chouinard, Fortier, Léveillé, Lock and Perreault – constitute the first generation of choreographers in Québec to become economically viable and internationally acclaimed. In fact, the local contemporary dance history of most countries in which this kind of dance appears includes indigenous Modern Dance “founders” and one or more generations of contesting postmodern choreographers. Although a massive undertaking, the collection and cross-cultural analysis of these indigenous dance histories has never been done and

might prove worthwhile to dance historians. While remaining committed to the original modernist ethos of innovation and authenticity, the choreographic aesthetic of postmodern dancers is generally more complex and cosmopolitan than in the previous modernist period. And though outside of the parameters of this research project to determine, and the subject of further study, I believe that their popular success in terms of their relatively large "audience base" as measured by presenting venues is due to their favoring of certain pleasurable and spectacular aspects. I am thinking here of characteristics such as athletic virtuosity, astonishing stage effects and beauty – that have rendered dances like *Luna* appealing to the massive audiences of large theaters. In another historical vein, Tembeck (1994a) posited that Laurin's choreography in general didn't "refer to a collective memory" as she believed did the Modern Dance, and return briefly to her contention that it was an aesthetic in which "images, choreographic and otherwise, are piled up, [...] whose guiding principle is 'impurity' (p. 120)." To my mind, this notion of impurity is associated with the characteristic eclecticism and mixing of *Luna*, discussed earlier. I also believe that postmodernist aesthetics like those of Laurin reflect living in a post-colonialist moment when notions like purity bring to mind distressing images of eugenics and ethnic cleansing.

As for the socio-cultural aspects, there was a traditional duality that was bridged within the *Luna* dance event: local vs. global artistic identity. By moving into the arena of extensive touring to large cultural centers in cities around the world, *O Vertigo* participated in creating – and bears the marks of – an internationalist choreographic aesthetic. At the same time, the *Luna* choreography was an authentic product of Laurin's unique background, environment and artistic ethos. Arbour (1999) explained the nature of this reconfiguration of local and internationalist orientations with an art historian's eye, in her account of the evolution of Québec visual arts in the last 50 years:



With the coming of new technological means in communication and information, what was local has become virtually international. While the modern was international and enemy of the local, the contemporary is international, integrating the local, by a direct or sinuous route.<sup>i</sup> (p. 107)

Furthermore, this is an era when most large cities of the world (especially in the Occident) are increasingly culturally diverse, the result of an influx of repeated waves of immigrants, migrants and refugees. As an embodiment of these social situations and predicaments, contemporary choreographers' discourse (albeit mainly in democratic societies) has generally turned away from universalist narratives and towards concepts like interculturalism and cultural identity. There are many examples of how these notions are embedded in multiple levels of the *Luna* dance event. For instance, Laurin spoke about how her Catholic and Québécoise girlhood, and her belief in the Automatist outlook of her *Refus Global* forebearers, contributed to a cultural specificity and local identity to her aesthetic. Also, interculturalism, in the sense of co-mingling references from different cultures, is one of those internationalist characteristics that were visible and audible in *Luna's* texts, images, and music and dancers. An intercultural dialogue was also inherent in the intersubjective dynamics, between *O Vertigo* members and local participants, of presenting the event in 40 diverse cities on different continents. *Luna's* audiences in Québec bore witness to diverse cultural origins, if data from even a small sample of 22 spectators in Montréal and Chicoutimi is any evidence. But the way in which a single choreographic event's form, function and meaning shifts somewhat as it travels to various theatres and cities around the world, merits further research in order to fully understand the phenomenon of internationalist aesthetics and the impact of globalization on contemporary dance aesthetics and events.

The politics operating for these large-scale contemporary dance companies no longer adhere to those of the imperial hierarchies of the ballet world, and seldom even to the benevolent monarchies and patriarchies of Modern Dance companies with their charismatic but authoritative artistic directors. Although there was no question that Laurin made the final decisions, the creed of empowerment influenced the way things were done at *O Vertigo* from the dancers' autonomy over their own training programs to the audience's freedom of interpretation. Another important example of this lay within the structure and choreographic processes of *Luna*, in particular the dynamics of power established between choreographer and dancers. The company was an "ensemble" group in many senses of the word. There was no division into classes of principal and secondary dancers (although Barry was "featured" in an emblematic solo and image). As well, a three-tier pay scale honoring seniority and dance experience was negotiated among the dancers themselves at the request of directors. Laurin's creative process allowed for autonomous choices from her dancers and she took care to enhance their individuality within the confines of the choreographic composition. This empowerment of the dancers was, however, measured and incomplete, as seen in two dancer's perception of the company as a large machine, despite a general sense of their co-workers as a kind of family.

The economic characteristics of the *Luna* event proved to be complex, multi-faceted. The dance company itself was a non-profit corporation, obliged continuously to generate public, private and "self-generated" (e.g. the summer workshop fees) funding to support its activities. While the performance attracted well-educated middle class participants for the most part, people from diverse social backgrounds and income levels participated in one way or another. Performances in the kind of upscale arts centers where *Luna* was presented tended to assign ticket prices that were often too costly to attract lower income spectators. But efforts at "audience development" among the dance presenters to "democratize" the arts, like the

student-priced tickets at the Chicoutimi performance for example, had led to various measures to keep the price as low as possible. Only a few wealthy participants were found in the course of this study among the artists, spectators and specialists. But some of the business members of *O Vertigo's* Board of Directors, who in the end were not among those finally interviewed, were as I discovered high-income arts patrons. Research about these wealthy arts donors and directors needs yet to be done if we are to fully understand the economic dynamics of dance events. As for the artists and artistic collaborators interviewed, their biographies show a gamut of origins from impoverished to middle class. But it is also true that all *O Vertigo* company members earned relatively high-end wages in the context of the Québec dance milieu, and so enjoyed at least middle class status in terms of income.

The aesthetics of *Luna* were emblematic of an eclecticism that has been fostered by the tenets of postmodern art. A striking example of this is how Laurin's approach to dance-making integrated elements of previously opposing artistic movements: idea-based Conceptualism, emotionally saturated Expressionism and a belief in the subconscious that belonged to Automatism. Once again drawing on the local knowledge of dance historian Tembeck (1994a), she observed that in choreographies of this kind "composite images [...] stream before us" and "works are overcoded, with multiple layers of meanings – thickets of choreographic discourse [...] (p. 120)." *Luna's* numerous, tightly packed and quickly changing movements indeed suggested to me, as it did to some of the participants, a multitude of references such as: everyday gesture, hand sign language, magical occurrences, playful encounters, gymnastics, poetic metaphors and more. As articulated in the project proposal by the choreographer and visual designer, during interviews with participants, and in the press previews and reviews, the thematic content intermeshed at least three threads: (a) an exploration of the science and the poetry of the moon and stars; (b) looking closely at the dancers' bodies with cameras and large lenses, at usually hidden aspects; and

(c) how new technologies can be used to create dream-like effects. As well, the way in which participants found meaning in the choreography took many forms, bearing witness to the policy of freedom of interpretation embedded in the postmodernist tradition.

## 9.2 Function: finding meaning within an eclectic aesthetic community

In the *Luna* dance event meaning is neither inherited nor prescribed. How the *Luna* dance event functioned to make meaning for its proponents was at once an individual and group enterprise. In one of the on-going aesthetic debates of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, aesthetic philosophers (Cohen and Copeland, 1983; Lavender, 1997; Sparshott, 1995) have asked whether the meaning of an art work lies in the mind of the perceiver, deeply embedded within the properties of the work itself, or a matter of the conscious (and perhaps unconscious) intentions of the artistic creator. The *Luna* study suggests the possibility of a reconciliation of all these positions: that meaning might be considered as a composite of all of these at once, and others as well that were not previously considered in the debates, such as the dancers' interpretations and programmers' context-based assessments.

*Luna* dance event participants might be thought of as part of a wider aesthetic community of interest and belief. In other words, *Luna's* eclectic band of participants were bound together principally by a common interest in contemporary dance performance and a belief in its significance and value. Months of hard work in creating and mounting a choreographic project came to fruition when all gathered to experience the moment of public presentation. In this kind of community – with its occasional and vocational members, dancing and non-dancing participants -- implicit codes of dance event behavior appeared for the most part to be understood and respected. Most everyone knew their role and what was expected of them. But as

became increasingly evident as the study progressed, the data didn't yield a common purpose. What I was able to determine were distinct but disparate modes of consensus about how the event made sense in the lives of participants. A multiplicity of modes also emerged in terms of the kinds of meanings – perceptions, interpretations and evaluations – ascribed to the *Luna* choreography by its participants.

To place these meanings into historical perspective, dance theorists and aesthetic philosophers during the early modernist period set out like human science researchers to discover “the” immutable elements of movement, laws of motion and compositional systems for dance. Was the new Modern Dance to be fundamentally rooted in psychology, spirituality, rational thought or principles of nature? Where was the body's center to be located: in the solar plexus, the pelvic floor, the center of gravity of its mass or somewhere else? What could be the body's “neutral stance,” its “basic body positions and movements,” fundamental principles? Rival theories led to the establishment of competing schools of thought and training about the form and function of dance. These disparate artistic views were never resolved into a single aesthetic ethos that would predominate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but in the 21<sup>st</sup> they persist as either rival positions or, as with *Luna*, have been combined to form new mixtures of style and substance in which the boundaries between formerly oppositional concepts seem to be dissolving. For dance historians and aestheticians, *Luna* might be seen as emblematic of a period that is one outcome of both the Modernist turn towards abstraction and postmodernism's resolute subjectivity and hybridization. As witness to this tendency, this is a period in which the prefix “inter-” abounds: interarts, interdisciplinarity, interactivity, intersubjectivity, intertextuality.

In the case of Laurin and others like her, traditional boundaries between experimental and popular art are seen to be dissolving as elements once belonging to one are intermixed with those of the other. For instance with *Luna*, Laurin hasn't sacrificed the emotional resonance that appears to

give her work wide popularity, in favor of complex, conceptualist content preferred by the artistic intelligentsia. In *Luna* it seems that the appealing pleasures of beauty and lyrical poetry temper the more disturbing and turbulent moments of discomfort that are found in the choreography. Spectacular stage effects (although she preferred to use them sparsely in *Luna*) and virtuosic physicality (especially the acrobatic duets) that are trademarks of her style have lent her work mass appeal. But she also demonstrated the attitude of a serious-minded *nouvelle danse* "researcher" who was fully committed to breaking new territory for the art form of dance. And so it is with *O Vertigo*, and other elite dance companies of its kind, that commercial viability and mass popularity don't necessarily preclude artistic depth and authenticity. But it bears mentioning that in the international marketplace of contemporary dance, *Luna* was not always perfectly suited to everyone's aesthetic priorities. For example, some of the Swiss and German critics cited the lack of a dramaturg's direction in sustaining the theatrical interest of the choreographic composition; one of the presenters found the work too conceptual to attain the emotional resonance he had anticipated; and several new-to-dance audience members expressed disappointment because of their difficulty in understanding the narrative.

*Luna's* artistic and specialist participants have answered in various manners the question of why be an artist that has animated recent critical debates challenging the high art/mass culture dichotomy (Arbour, 1999; Marcus and Meyers, 1995). In the dance world of *Luna*, being a dancer was very rarely a question of birthright, as evidenced by how few had artist parents. Many, but not all, did have parents who valued the arts and so nurtured the artistic inclinations of their offspring. But in some cases, like that of Laurin herself, the artistic professionals explained that there was little or no family encouragement. *O Vertigo* dancers considered it as either a fateful or accidental set of circumstances that led to their choice of working in dance. As they told it, the dance world offered them a way of being and

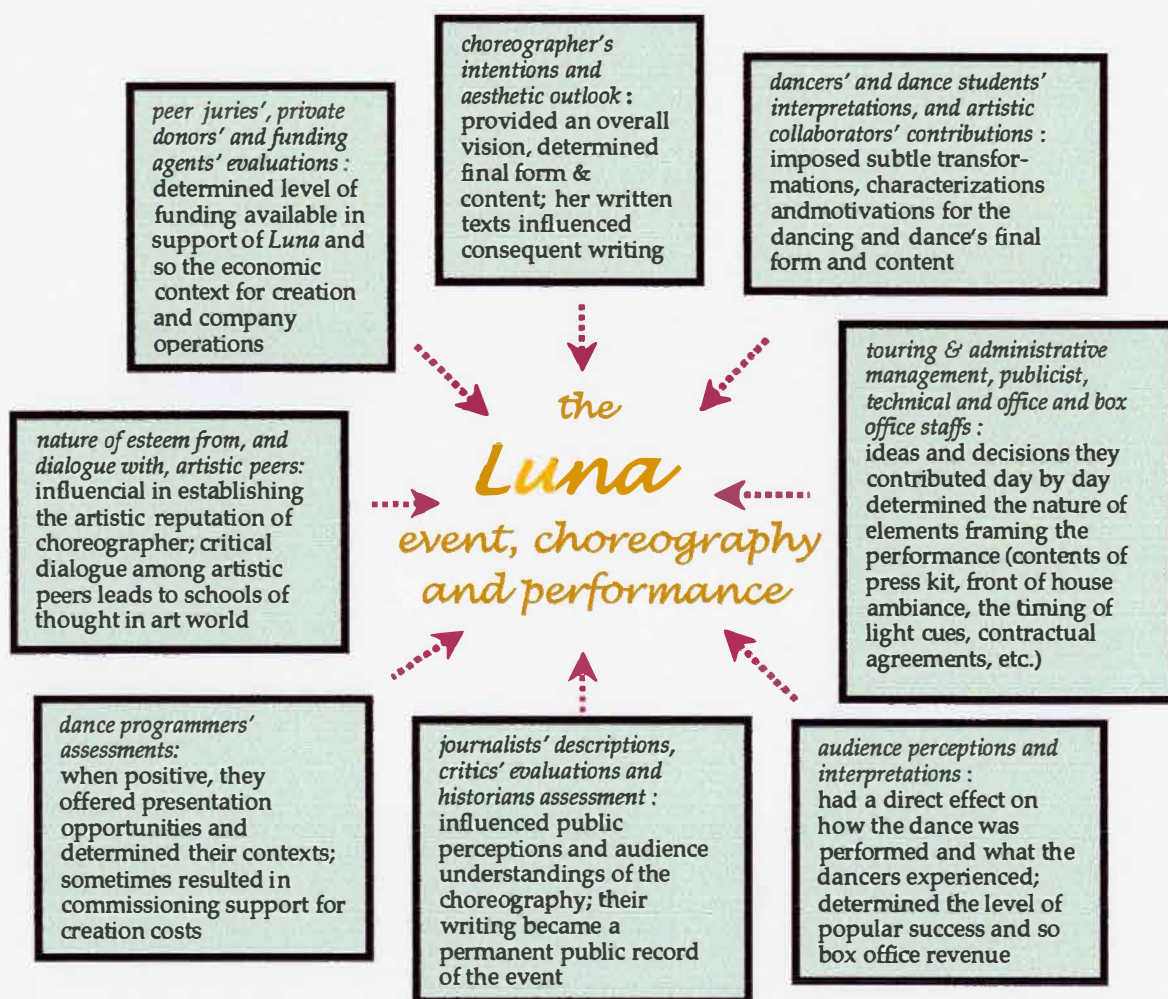


living that seemed to “fit” their desires and aspirations, providing a sense of purpose and a significant means of self-expression. And in their biographical stories, the dancers recounted how it was that they displayed an irrepressible physicality since early youth. At the same time their bodies betrayed the signs of the physical rigors, chronic and debilitating injuries that challenged their longevity in the field. But one of the most fascinating mysteries about aesthetic meaning, for which this study provided clues, was how the dancers created strategies for making sense and motivating the abstract movements they were called on to perform by Laurin. In this story of *Luna*, each one recounted how they first set out to master the physical skills required by newly invented movement sequences, but eventually were compelled to create a way in which they could give private meanings and motivations to the movements. Although the company shared a common metaphor they called “the inner garden,” each dancer also created a conscious and personal approach to interpreting the sense, to giving character, to the abstract posturings and gesturings required of them as they danced *Luna*.

As for the audience, the 22 focus group members proved to be a diverse group who came to the performance of *Luna* with disparate points of view and expectations. The data in this study and others (e.g. Cloutier and Pronovost, 1996) revealed various modes of apprehension by which audience members organize their dance-watching. On the other hand, I also witnessed first hand how *Luna* spectators were also drawn into collective behaviors as they watched, and particularly at the moment of applause. It has also been seen how with little instructive guidance in dance literacy, learning to be a contemporary dance spectator remains for spectators largely a “kinesthetic” tradition acquired by repeated exposure and discussions with dance-going comrades.

Throughout this ethnography, discussion and examination of meaning has hovered around the proposal that the *Luna* event was meaningful to its participants, and has delineated the modes and genres of meaning making.

But this study also demonstrates that meaning and interpretation are reciprocal, and that as participants went about fulfilling their roles in the dance event they also literally contributed to its very sense and substance, as charted below:



**Figure 9.1** The genre of contribution made by each participant group to the sense and substance of *Luna*.

This schematic representation not only synthesizes the impact of each group and the part they played in the unfolding of *Luna*, but it provides an exemplary illustration of Becker's vision (1982), underlying the entirety of this research project, of art work as a human activity that "involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people" and most significantly that "[t]hrough their cooperation, the art work we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be. The work always shows signs of that cooperation" (p. 1). For instance, *Luna's* choreographic vision may have been under the masterful control of Laurin, but it was ultimately her dancers who determined the essence and quality of the dance's interpretation, as did the stage crew for the accompanying technical effects. It was funders and administrative personnel who were largely responsible for the economic and logistic parameters of the creation and performance. And the various expressive specialists framed the choreographic presentation as they went about exercising their expertise in supporting the creation, presenting the public performance, and interpreting and evaluating its sense and viability to the art world. This study demonstrates how the sense and substance of the *Luna* choreography, performance and event was in part the effects of these contributions from and among its participants.

### 9.3 Practice: transforming contemporary dance presentation

What might be the potential effects of this way of envisioning a dance performance on dance presentation? In a practice replete with quantitative audience development strategies aimed at improving box office revenue and driven by economic models from the so-called cultural industries (for-profit art-making enterprises), this ethnographic study would move dance presenters in a resolutely subjective and intersubjective direction. Discussions among a small group of American presenters are already

pointing a small minority towards methodologies for evaluating dance performances as qualitative human experiences and community gatherings. As *Luna's* "research specialist" I can already confirm that the way in which I go about my work as a dance presenter has been fundamentally changed in the course of forging this way of thinking about dance performances.

This realization crystallized one evening during a dance performance on March 17, 2005 of the Random Dance Company in Roubaix, France. The occasion was the gala opening performance of a young choreographer's festival presented by *Danse à Lille*. I began to notice that the way my mind now navigated a dance occasion had radically shifted. No longer was I preoccupied with the usual presenting issues: e.g. how would Tangente's audiences respond, was the aesthetic appropriate to our programming mandate, and so on. But the first thought that actually came to mind as I walked into the lobby was the question "who are all these people and what were they doing here?" This wider frame of reference now included social, cultural and historic contexts. The dynamics of interaction among the participants were now at the center of my concern and the possible range of answers to "why dance?" now appeared to be as richly varied as the cultural identities and ideologies of those who engaged in the dance event. In actual practice this has meant that my artistic direction is shifting towards the notion of creating "community events," rather than simply of programming a dance creation. In this new way of thinking for me, I now consider an evening of dance in terms of intensifying the interaction between audience members, audience and performers, artistic creators and even technicians. Could a dance performance be more than a passive contemplation of a dance work? And it has brought me to once more re-examine the old boundaries I had set up around traditional, urban, social and artistic forms of dance, and ask myself "what kinds of contemporary dance forms might be pertinent to this contemporary art world?"

I also venture to propose that this study offers contemporary dance researchers and presenters the possibility of re-aligning our ethos with those who study presentational dance events in village squares. Are our artistic dances really so different from other kinds of dances in the world? As Kealiinohomoku has been arguing all along (1969/1970, 1976), all dances are ethnic because in fact social and cultural in nature. Throughout her writings she reminds us that both art and folk dance have dancers with special trainings who perform for spectators, patrons, a socio-cultural context that determines the dance's "ethnic identity," a local dance history, and a period of preparation and gathering of resources for the dance. Participants come together with a sense of the appropriate decorum for the occasion. And I would add that every dance event has its expressive specialists, administrators, evaluators and technicians. Would the distinction of contemporary dance survive this alliance with traditional dancers? I believe it would. Like all other dances that are performed for spectators, those that are contemporary and artistic also have unique characteristics that distinguish them from other kinds of dance. In the case of *Luna* there are features, as Small (1998) has pointed out, such as an artistic creator who envisions a new work, an extensive creative process, specially designed theatrical buildings and stages for the dance performances, and so on. And this ethnography of *Luna* provides examples of how contemporary dance events are bounded by distinct ways of doing, thinking and believing that are grounded in their own histories and ethos. But what might indeed be lost in this association of art and folk dance is the persistent hierarchy of values in which the art-identified presentational dancing, especially in occidental cultures, has long claimed the highest position.

#### 9.4 Epilogue in the Aftermath: Passing on to *Pass a r e*

Bright white points of light on a black screen were the last image of Laurin's new work *Pass a r e*. They were an appropriate metaphor for the insights that came bursting out everywhere, as I returned once again to observe *O Vertigo* for the first time since leaving the field of *Luna*. I sat at *Place des Arts* in Montréal waiting for the premiere performance to begin on February 25, 2005, and wondered what it was going to be like to watch a dance company that now held so many stories for me. It was certainly a shock to attend the performance three years later. Where were Ken, Anna, Donald and Chi? Mélanie and Patrick were now the senior dancers. And how strange it was indeed when I visited their new offices and studios deep in the recesses of *Place des Arts*, to collect a few last pieces of information! There were no windows and it seemed like more of a fortress than an artists' workplace.

As I exited the theatre I wondered, could my experience possibly have been more dense and intense? I had found my mind hungry to look at one and the same time beyond and more deeply into the dancing. The dancers' lives, creative processes, intellectual and poetic ideas, imagined backstage goings-on, multiples frames of interpretation among spectators, the sonic filament connecting spectators at the moment of applause, all this and more was rushing through my consciousness at the speed of thought.

At the post-performance reception in the elegant lobby of the opera house, I chatted with dancer Demers<sup>1</sup> who provided me with a final, fresh insight with which to close this study. *Luna*, she concluded, had after all been a beautiful aesthetic object. She mused that in retrospect, it now seemed as if "silent and complete in itself." She added by way of evidence that the dancers didn't talk together much while creating and dancing *Luna*. But she

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<sup>1</sup> From a personal conversation with Demers on February 25, 2005.



explained that with *Pass a r e* the dancers' stage personas were "so incarnate" that it was as if they were real people talking together on and off stage. Conversations had been frequent during the creative process this time among the dancers and choreographer about the ideas spoken out loud and explored in the piece. With *Pass a r e*, meaning and motivation had been so much clearer and easier for her to identify.

Demers' perspective was a vivid reminder that in this contemporary dance world it is imperative that each choreographic project be created anew, and that these dance events are occasions for participants to encounter unique, newly imagined visions of the world through the dance.

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Original French texts

<sup>i</sup> "Avec l'avènement des nouveaux moyens technologiques de communication et d'information, le local est devenu virtuellement international. Le moderne avait été international et ennemi du local, le contemporain est international, intégrant le local, par voie directe ou détournée." Arbour

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- Jowitt, Deborah. (October 16, 2001). Woman-Run Worlds. *The Village Voice*. New York City, USA. 59.

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- Chadwick, Alan. (2002, March 15). Reach vertical limits. *Metrolife*. Glasgow, Scotland.
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### **Field Photos** (Taken by the researcher)



**Photo 1: Audience focus group, August 19, 2000 at 3:15 PM, pilot project at Jacob's Pillow**  
Left to right: Joyce and Bob Mass, Amy Verebay, Alba Tutunauer, Mary Kostman, Lorraine-Singer, Dena Davida, Harvey Auber and June Auger, Linda Viera



**Photo 2: O Vertigo building, front view, on rue de Rouen, May 24, 2000**





Photo 3: Dancers' rehearsal break in the kitchen, December 18, 2000  
Left to right: Isabel Greaves, Antje Riede, Raymond Brisson, Patrick Lamothe, Ken Gould



Photo 4: Entrance to O Vertigo offices with Bernard Lagacé at work  
May 23, 2000



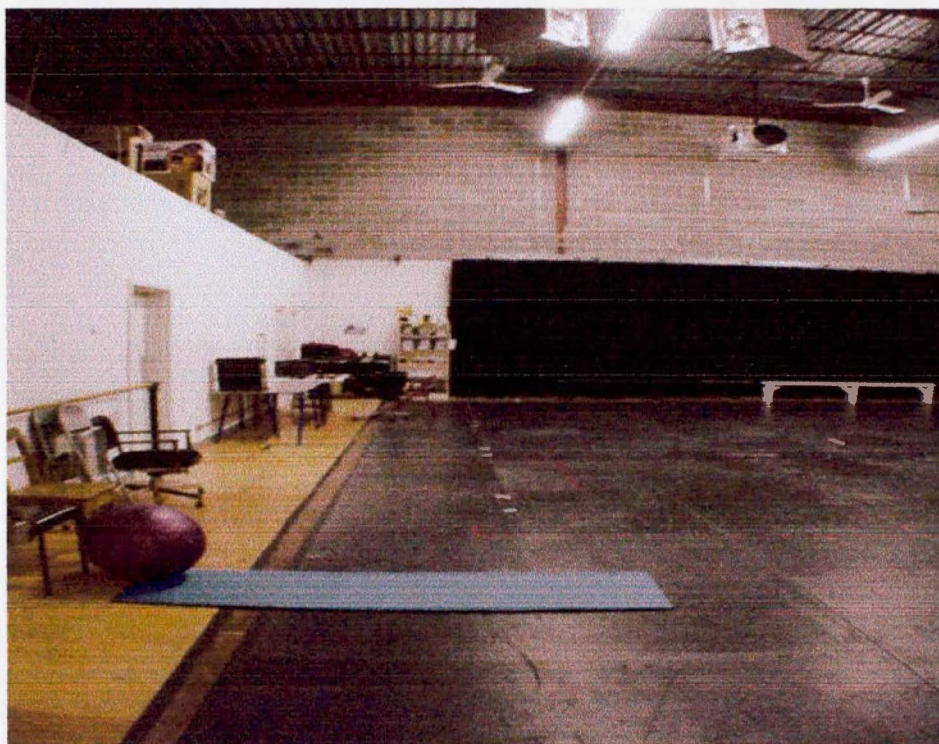


Photo 5: Large rehearsal studio, May 24, 2000



Photo 8 : Small rehearsal studio, May 24, 2000





Photo 7: Long standing behind a lens in a creative process session,  
December 18, 2000



Photo 8: Silky moon-like dresses hanging in storage, December 11, 2000



Photo 9 : Office meeting in kitchen, May 23, 2000  
Left to right: Sylvie Ménard, Corrine Faucher, Evelyn Follan, Bernard Lagacé, Ginette Laurin





Photo 10 : The *Luna* poster with Barry in the moon dress





Photos 11 : Publicity flyers for *Luna*



Photo 12: Laurin and Brisson giving notes to (left to right) Barry, Lamothe, Rodrigue, unknown, Nguyen, Demers, Reide, on December 15, 2000





Photo 13: Demers massaging Nguyen during notes session, December 15, 2000



Photo 14: Brisson and Laurin giving notes to the dancers, December 15, 2000





Photo 15: Laurin speaking with community audience, open house at the *O Vertigo* studios during the *Journées de la Culture*, dancers Rodrigue and Riede, September 2000



Photo 16 : Kitchen wall with photos, objects and texts of dancers, May 24, 2000





Photo 17 : The *O Vertigo* booth at CINARS, Bernard Lagacé, November 30. 2



Photo 18 : The in-studio showing of *Luna* work-in-progress during CINARS, with Menno Plukker and Bernard Lagacé speaking to dance presenters, December 1, 2000



Photo 19: The researcher dancing, 5 years old, December 12, 1954



**Table 5.1.1**  
**Characteristics of audience focus group members**

**Audience focus group 1/ *Festival international de nouvelle danse*/ 9-22-01**

name	age	sex	profession	income	education
Jerry Antonyk	44	m	controller, secretary	45k +	B.A./ admin.
Ela Dura	45	f	researcher, linguistics	15-30k	Phd/ linguistics
Roger Hobden	45	m	osteopath for dancers	45k +	Prof. institute
Noumbé Diop	22	f	student	0-15k	B.A. degree
Gabrielle Lamb	26	f	professional dancer	15-30k	high school grad.
Eric Villeneuve	26	m	hand sign interpreter	15-30k	univ. degree

**Audience focus group 2/ *Festival international de nouvelle danse*/ 9-23-01**

name	age	sex	profession	income	education
Nathalie Cashing	18	f	retail, sales	15-30k	high school grad.
Michel Desnoyers	52	m	project manager, music teacher	0-15k	B.A./ musicology
Kevin	43	m	visual artist	15-30k	some univ./ visual arts
Ginette Logueux	52	f	textile artist	0-15k	some univ./ visual arts
Bruno Roy	66	m	professor	30-40k	univ. degree
Mark Wilson	57	m	translator; dilettant	45k	univ. degree/ engineering
Peggy Wilson	51	f	tour manager	15-30k	CEGEP diploma

**Audience focus group 3/ *Théâtre du Saguenay, Chicoutimi P.Q.* / 11-03-01**

name	age	sex	profession	income	education
Jeannine Hubert	65	f	nurse, retired	15-30k	univ. degree
Lorette Hubert	62	f	retired	15-30k	high school, secretarial school
Eric Potvin	27	m	marketing agent & semi- professional dancer	15-30k	univ. degree/ arts pedagogy, communications
Steven Renald	38	m	teacher	30-45k	univ./ art history
Emma Renaud	47	f	medical secretary	—	univ. diploma/ laboratory work
Andréa Simard	16	f	high school student	0-15k*	some high school
Jimmy Simard	26	m	"intervenant en démystification"	0-15k	3 yrs. CEGEP
Normand Simard	51	m	teacher; psychologist	45k +	M.A./ psychologie
Georges-Nicolas Tremblay	23	m	dancer, dance teacher, choreographer, actor	0-15k	B.A./ theatre

\*lives with parents

**Table 5.1.2**  
**Characteristics of audience focus group members:**  
**Place of residence, urban/rural/suburban, ethnic/cultural identity**

**Audience focus group 1 / Festival international de nouvelle danse/ 9-22-01**

name	place of residence	urban, rural or suburban	ethnic/cultural identity
<b>Jerry Antonyk</b>	Sweden	urban	Canadian-Ukrainian
<b>Ela Dura</b>	Sweden	urban	Swedish-Polish
<b>Roger Hobden</b>	Montréal, Québec	urban	Québécois
<b>Noumbé Diop</b>	Longueuil, Québec	urban	Africaine-Québécoise "moitié-moitié"
<b>Gabrielle Lamb</b>	Montréal, Québec	urban	Southern American & Scotch-Irish
<b>Eric Villeneuve</b>	St-Amable, Québec	suburban	Québécois

**Audience focus group 2 / Festival international de nouvelle danse/ 9-23-01**

name	place of residence	urban, rural or suburban	ethnic/cultural identity
<b>Nathalie Cashing</b>	Victoria, B.C. Canada	suburban	WASP *
<b>Michel Desnoyers</b>	Montréal, Québec (dans le Plateau)	urban	Québécois
<b>Kevin</b>	Montréal, Québec	urban	WASP*
<b>Ginette Logueux</b>	La Patrie, Québec	rural	Québécoise
<b>Bruno Roy</b>	La Patrie, Québec	rural	Québécois
<b>Mark Wilson</b>	Montréal, Québec (Le Plateau)	urban	English Canadian "by origin"
<b>Peggy Wilson</b>	Ville St-Pierre, Québec	urban	Irish Canadian

\* Acronym for white Anglo-Saxon Protestant; suggests stereotypical white North American

**Audience focus group 3 / Théâtre du Saguenay, Chicoutimi P.Q. / 11-03-01**

name	place of residence	urban, rural or suburban	ethnic/cultural identity
<b>Jeannine Hubert</b>	Jonquière, Québec	urban	Mix of New Brunswick, Magdeleine Islands & Saguenay Lac St-Jean
<b>Lorette Hubert</b>	Jonquière, Québec	urban	Saguenéenne, Québécoise
<b>Eric Potvin</b>	Chicoutimi, Québec	urban	Québécoise + « un soupçon d'amérindien, "un bluet"
<b>Steven Renald</b>	Chicoutimi, Québec	urban	Québécoise
<b>Emma Renaud</b>	Alma, Québec	urban	Québécoise-Jeannoise
<b>Andréa Simard</b>	Alma, Québec	urban	Québécoise "de langue française"
<b>Jimmy Simard</b>	Chicoutimi, Québec	urban	Jeannoise, Saguenéen, Québécois, être humain
<b>Normand Simard</b>	Alma, Québec	45k +	Québécois francophone "de souche"



**Table 5.2**  
**Characteristics of dance creators interviewed**

Name and role in company	Sex	Age (in 2001)	Years in dance* & year they joined the company	Home city & national identity	Parent's economic status	Dance & art background, training, & education**
Ginette Laurin, choreographer & artistic director	f	46	30+	LeGardeur, PQ Québécoise	working class	gymnastics, GBC, Nouvelle Aire, UQAM
Mélanie Demers, dancer	f	27	6 1998	Montréal, PQ Québécoise Haitian	modest	social dancer, LADMMI (3 yrs.)
David Rose, dancer	m	36	16 1996	Philadelphia, USA US/Canadian	middle class	social dancer, ballet classes, prof. co. class
Kha Nguyen, substitute dancer	m	29	8+ 2000	Vietnamese (came to Canada at 7 yrs)	very poor	arts education LADAMMI (3 yrs.)
Patrick Lamothe, dancer	m	25	10 2000	Acton Vale, PQ québécois	poor, single parent	LADMMI
Marie-Claude Rodrigue, dancer	f	37	13+ 1991	village in Beauce, PQ Québécoise	poor	figure skating B.A.-UQAM LADMMI
Anna (Antje) Riede, dancer	f	34	15+ 1998	Halle, Germany East German	no class perception	dance training: improv., dance therapy
Anne Barry, dancer	f	40	20 1991	Deep River, Ontario Eng. Canadian	"very comfortable"	Toronto Dance Theatre School
Raymond Brisson, rehearsal director	m	46	26+ 1996	Montréal, PQ Québécois	poor, later middle class	visual arts
Isabelle Greaves, apprentice	f	25	no contract	Ile Perrot, PQ Québécoise	middle class	gymnastics
Axel Morgenthaler, lighting and visual designer	m	36	10 years with O Vertigo	Bern, Switzerland Swiss German	middle class	electronics music classes visual design
Denis Lavoie, costume designer	m	44	19+	Lac St Jean, P.Q. Québécois	middle class	3 yrs. ballets jazz B.A. in dance at UQAM

\*"Years in dance" indicates the number of years working as a professional dancer.

\*\*Abbreviations: GBC is Grands Ballets Canadiens, LADMMI is the *Ateliers de danse moderne* program, UQAM is the Dance Department of the *Université du Québec à Montréal*, Bourse FCAR is a government student grant for pre-professional training after studies.



**Table 5.3**  
 Characteristics of dance event personnel and specialists interviewed

<u>name &amp; role in dance event</u>	<u>age (in 2001)</u>	<u>sex</u>	<u>profession</u>	<u>nationality / ethnicity</u>	<u>education</u>
Bernard Legacé, executive director of <i>O Vertigo</i>	early 40s	m	artistic manager, producer	Québécois	interior design , architecture & stage design self-taught arts administrator
Jocelyn Proulx, technical director of <i>O Vertigo</i>	41	m	production manager, technical dir. lighting	Québécois	CEGEP Ste-Thérèse, 3 years of classes in stage techniques
Lise Clément, communications consultant for Auditorium Dufour	in her 50s	f	free-lance production manager communicatio ns consultant writer	Québécoise	a class in film script writing at the Sorbonne
Philip Szporer, dance critic and reporter, scholar, <i>animateur</i>	44	m	free-lance dance writer & broadcaster & filmmaker & lecturer	Polish-Russian- Jewish- Canadian	B.A. / English Literature Grad. Dip. / Communications worked with a dance company & took various workshop classes
Linde Howe- Beck, dance writer & critic	in her 60s	f	career journalist & professional dance writer	English Canadian	18 yrs. of ballet t.v. jazz dance training journalism
Stephanie Brody, <i>chroniqueur de danse</i>	35	f	freelance arts administrator chroniqueur de danse	French & English Canadian	arts emphasis in high school artist parents arts management training
Iro Tembeck, Québec dance critic & historian	54	f	dance historian, critic & educator	Greek-Canadian	dance school at 5 yrs. BA, history minor MA, English literature studied jazz & modern

Table 5.3 (con't)

Martin Wexler, programming director of the Joyce Theater (NYC)	38	m	arts <u>administrator</u>	American (USA)	dance & economics double major in college
Diane Boucher, associate director & vice-president of the <i>Festivsl international de nouvelle danse de Montréal</i>	49	f	arts organiser, administrator & curator	Québécoise	university education in anthropology & art history
Stepfan Schwartz, Tanzhaus programmer (Düsseldorf)	37	m	dance organizer	German	university : "cultural sciences" major, MA thesis in Contact Improvisation
Walter Heun, <u>lucerntanz</u> (Lucerne) & Joint Ventures (Munich) dance producer	38	m	dance promotor, manager, artistic director	German	university theatre major
Claude Gosselin, president of the Boars of Directors of the O Vertigo dance		m	contemporary arts <i>animateur</i> organiser of arts exhibitions	Québécois	CEGEP : visual arts and arts activity organizer University of Montréal art history major (social intervention emphasis)
Line Lanthier, dance funding agent for the <i>Conseil des arts &amp; des lettres du Québec</i>	42	f	dance administrator	Québécoise	university studies in dance and psychology on-the-job training in dance & administration

**Table 5.4.1**  
 Characteristics of workshop students in focus group

**Dance student focus group/ O Vertigo summer dance workshop/8-16-01**

name & nationality	age	sex	profession	income	education
Jobina Bardai, <i>Canadian</i>	23	f	dance artist	0-15k	Prof. dance school; some univ./dance
Elsa Gomez, <i>Mexican</i>	20	f	student/dancer	0-15k	dance academy
Andrea Lieske, <i>German</i>	32	f	dancer	15-30k	BFA/dance
Jacob Morales Montano, <i>Mexican</i>	23	m	student	0-15k	univ./admin., ballet training
Aura M. Patron Mora, <i>Mexican</i>	27	f	dance student	0-15k*	univ./ 7 yrs. graphic design
Harper River, <i>USA</i>	25	f	dancer/choreographer	0-15k	BFA/dance
Sarah Poole, <i>USA</i>	29	f	dancer	15-30k	BFA/dance performance
Bernardo Rubinstein, <i>Mexican</i>	30s	m	designer, dancer, actor	15-30k	MA/physical theatre
Ruby Tagle, <i>Mexican</i>	39	f	choreographer, teacher & dancer	0-15k	Professional training in contemporary dance
Nina Wehnert, <i>German</i>	23	f	? (question mark written in)	none*	high school diploma

\*lives with parents



**Table 5.4.2**  
**Characteristics of workshop students in focus groups**

<b>Dance student focus group/ O Vertigo summer dance workshop/8-16-01</b>			
<b>name &amp; nationality</b>	<b>place of residence</b>	<b>urban, rural or suburban</b>	<b>ethnic/cultural identity</b>
Jobina Bardai, <i>Canadian</i>	Ottawa, Canada	urban	Indian/ East African
Elsa Gomez, <i>Mexican</i>	Mazatlan, Sinloa, Mexico	urban	Mexican
Andrea Lieske, <i>German</i>	New York City, USA	urban or suburban?*	German
Jacob Morales Montano, <i>Mexican</i>	Mexico City, Mexico	urban	Mexican « with diversity »
Aura M. Patron Mora, <i>Mexican</i>	Mazatlan, Sinloa, Mexico	urban	North Mexico
Harper River, <i>USA</i>	Wilmington, N.C., USA	urban	white
Sarah Poole, <i>USA</i>	Brooklyn, N.Y., U.S.A.	urban	WASP & « mongrel »
Bernardo Rubinstein, <i>Mexican</i>	Mexico	urban	« universal »
Ruby Tagle, <i>Mexican</i>	Mexico, DF	urban	« Is too eclectic and with a lot of different influences. For me right now the people in Mexico is changing »
Nina Wehnert, <i>German</i>	? (in transit...)	urban	German and I'm lost

## APPENDIX A

Written agreement with *O Vertigo* (in French)  
and interview autorisation forms (English)

Dena Davida, doctoral candidate  
Programme de doctorat en « Études et pratiques des arts »  
Université du Québec à Montréal

## ENTENTE

### Avec Ginette Laurin, directrice artistique d'O Vertigo

Dans le cadre de sa thèse de doctorat, Dena Davida fait une étude ethnographique qui porte sur la création, le développement et la présentation d'un nouveau projet chorégraphique de la compagnie de danse *O Vertigo* durant la saison 2000-2001. Par la suite, elle fera également l'étude d'un nouveau projet chorégraphique du Andrew Tay et Sasha Kleinplatz. L'intention initiale de ce travail est de décrire l'organisation de deux « événements de nouvelle danse » à Montréal à partir des études de cas de ces deux compagnies de danse, afin de découvrir comment ces processus deviennent significatifs et ce, à travers les différents points de vue de chacun des participant(e)s.

Afin de réaliser cette étude ethnographique, Dena Davida sera présente au sein de la compagnie *O Vertigo* à raison de trois fois par semaine pendant deux à trois heures; à l'intérieur des bureaux et des studios, et les accompagnera parfois en tournée. Elle fera de l'observation avec discrétion, prendra des notes et posera quelques fois des questions. Elle réalisera des entrevues approfondies d'une durée de 30 à 60 minutes au moins une fois avec chaque membre de la compagnie, et au moins trois fois avec la directrice artistique Ginette Laurin, pendant la période de l'année de recherche. Ces entrevues seront enregistrées sur ruban, transcrites et divulguées par la suite aux personnes interrogées qui en feront la correction et apporteront leurs commentaires (à l'exception de Ginette Laurin qui ne tient pas en prendre connaissance). Elle prendra des photos et enregistrera des courtes bandes vidéo d'une durée de 10 à 15 secondes, après avoir obtenu la permission des personnes filmées. Elle va aussi consulter les archives de la compagnie et amasser tout autre type de matériaux et d'images pertinentes à la recherche. De plus, elle prévoit animer des groupes de discussion ainsi que des entrevues en collaboration avec trois organismes hôtes qui présenteront les spectacles d'*O Vertigo* à compter d'août 2000 jusqu' à août 2001.

Les derniers résultats écrits de cette recherche comprendront des données recueillies au cours des entrevues enregistrées sur ruban (en citation), et des observations réalisées lors des conversations et activités quotidiennes des membres de la compagnie. Les résultats inclueront également des images photographiques. Ces derniers seront écrits et divulgués publiquement lors d'une



conférence académique, sous forme d'articles académiques et feront possiblement l'objet d'un livre.

Lors de son séjour au sein de la compagnie O Vertigo, Dena Davida se soumettra au protocole suivant :

1. Un horaire de ses visites sera présenté préalablement à la directrice administrative ou à sa représentante et devra être approuvé. Dans le cas où elle se présente au studio de pratique ou aux séances de création, ces visites devront être approuvées par Ginette Laurin ou Raymond Brisson.
2. Elle s'engage à quitter les lieux sur demande.
3. Elle s'engage à préserver la confidentialité de toute information de nature privée, divulguée par la compagnie.
4. Le crédit artistique sera attribué aux créateurs et aux sujets d'un texte, d'une image ou de tout autre document rendu public.
5. Les données de recherche (prises de notes, photos, etc.) seront disponibles sur demande pour consultation par la compagnie. Toutes les citations directes qui devront être incluses dans la thèse de doctorat (y compris tout document public) seront présentées à la personne citées en vue d'obtenir son approbation. Finalement, les transcriptions des entrevues réalisées et la copie du document final de recherche à publier, seront offertes aux personnes concernées pour révision et commentaires (à l'exception de Ginette Laurin qui a spécifié de ne pas en prendre connaissance.)
6. Toutes les dépenses encourues au cours du processus de recherche, spécialement lors de la présence de la candidate au doctorat pendant des tournées de la compagnie, seront entièrement prises à sa charge. De plus, advenant l'utilisation des ressources de la compagnie (photocopies ou autres), elle devra en déboursier les coûts.
7. La compagnie peut choisir en tout temps de mettre fin à sa participation à ce projet de recherche. De plus, ce contrat va être révisé au besoin par la candidate au doctorat et par la compagnie, au fur et à mesure que le projet évoluera.

Dena Davida, qui fera cette recherche, ainsi que la représentante de la compagnie Bernard Legacé, acceptent mutuellement d'entreprendre ce projet de recherche selon les conditions et circonstances présentées dans cette entente.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature de Dena Davida

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature de Bernard Legacé

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Dena Davida, doctoral candidate  
« Études et pratiques des arts » doctoral programme  
Université du Québec à Montréal

## Interview Authorisation

I agree to participate in an interview with Dena Davida as part of her doctoral project "Alive in the movement: an ethnographic study of meaning in two Montreal '*nouvelle danse* events' ". I understand that the questions are about the specifics of my ideas about the notion of "contemporary art dance events," and that the interview is being tape-recorded and transcribed.

After reading the interview transcription and amending it with my own changes, I agree that this material may be used by Dena Davida in her final manuscript, as well as in conferences and future publications (in the form of articles, books and cd-roms) arising from this doctoral research.

Name : Anne Barry and Raymond Brisson

Role : Dancer and rehearsal director for *O Vertigo Danse*

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Data summary

## Summary of Luna data: quantity and types

### Fieldnotes :

133.5 hours in the field (excluding pilot study); 240 pages of fieldnotes transcribed from handwritten and head notes in the field; beginning with the first contact with O Vertigo studios on April 7, 2001 to last fieldwork session at the second Montréal performance on October 12, 2002.

Interviews (recorded and transcribed; 30 in-depth interviews, 4 focus groups, 2 informal group exchanges; in English and in French; 20 to 50 minutes in length:

#### Ginette Laurin (artistic director, choreographer)

1. Public interview with Phillip Szporer at Jacob's Pillow, August 10, 2000 (secondary source)
2. Initial interview, June 2, 2000
3. Final interview, March 7, 2002

#### Artistic collaborators

1. Denis Lavoie, costume designer, June 11, 2001
2. Axel Morgenthelar, visual designer, January 28, 2002
3. Raymond Brisson, "répétiteur/accompagnateur," March 4, 2002

#### Staff and board of directors

1. Jocelyn Proulx, technical director, March 30, 2001
2. Bernard Legacé, general director, May 4, 2001
3. Claude Gosselin, art curator and board member, July 24, 2001

#### Dancers

1. Mélanie Demers, July 9, 1998 (before joining O Vertigo)
2. David Rose, March 29, 2000
3. Isabelle Greaves (apprentice), December 6, 2000
4. Kha Nguyenen (temporary contract), December 8, 2000
5. Patrick Lamothe, December 18, 2000
6. Informal short exchange with Patrick Lamothe, Mélanie Demers, Donald Weikart, Kha Nguyen, Chi Long, and Antje Reade, March 1, 2001
7. Marie-Claude Rodrigue, August 24, 2001
8. Antje Reade, September 19, 2001
9. Anne Barry, March 4, 2002

#### Audience

1. Two audience focus groups at the FIND, September 22 and 23, 2001
2. Audience focus group, Auditorium Dufour, Chicoutimi, November 3, 2001

### Dance presenters and animators of the Luna project

1. Nick Stuccie, Gyorgy Szabo, Aldo Grompone, Hank Beorhol, Ralph Schluter, during the CINARS showcase, December 2, 2000
2. Stefan Schwartz, Tanzhaus Die Werkstatt in Dusseldorf, March 10, 2001
3. Martin Wexler, The Joyce Theater in NYC, October 25, 2001
4. Diane Boucher, FIND in Montreal, December 19, 2001
5. Lise Clément, Auditorium Dufour in Chicoutimi, February 6, 2002
6. Walter Heun, lucerntheater in Switzerland, May 3 and 5, 2002 (email)

### Other kinds of dancer participants

1. Myriam Farger, dancer and David Rose's girlfriend, December 13, 2000
2. Focus group with 10 *O Vertigo* dance workshop students, August 16, 2001

### Dance specialists

1. Dance writer and critic Phillip Szporer, July 9, 1998
2. Dance writer and critic Linde Howe-Beck, August 27, 1998
3. Dance anthropologist Joann Kealiinohomoku, June 12, 1999
4. Lyne Lanthier, dance agent at Québec's funding agency, August 28, 2001
5. Dance historian, critic and educator Iro Tembeck, October 31, 2001
6. Dance writer and critic Stephanie Brody, April, 2001
7. Folklorist and ethnographer Pierre Chartrand, May 2, 2002

### Artifacts (documents, images, objects, etc.):

1. Publicity/promotional materials
  - 1.1 Full-length film of *Luna* produced by the company
  - 1.2 CD ROM, Web pages and press kits
  - 1.3 Press releases for various aspects of company activities
  - 1.4 Posters for the *Luna* tour
  - 1.5 Fliers and programmes from individual theatres
  - 1.6 Questionnaires for an *O Vertigo* audience survey
2. 2 interviews undertaken and transcribed by Henri Barass (research for his book on Laurin), November 10, 1994 and January 19, 1995
3. Project description and summary of budget for *Luna*
4. Photos taken by researcher, and also produced by the company
5. Dancer's notes from their journals and written in fieldnote book
6. Text and templates used during creative process
7. Touring schedules and working schedules for the company
8. Lists of staff and company members with contact numbers
9. A journal article given to author by costume designer about his work
10. A list of company member's birthdays
11. A list of auxiliary company activities outside of the Luna project
  - 1.1 Flyer for company auditions
  - 1.2 Press release for company's summer workshop
  - 1.3 Press releases about a project to build a new space for company
  - 1.4 Publicity postcard and press release from the CINARS showcase

## APPENDIX C

### Fieldwork log



## **O Vertigo fieldnote log summary of dates and hours**

### **First contact**

April 7, 2001, Saturday, phone contact with Evelyne to set up meeting with Ginette Laurin.

March 3, 2000 at 2:30 PM: O'Vertigo studios, first visit to studios and meeting with Ginette Laurin (1 hour).

### **Period without dancers, only administrative planning**

March 23, 2000, Tuesday from 9:30 AM - 1 PM: first field visit to studios (3 1/2 hours).

March 24, 2000, Wednesday from 12:30 - 3 PM: observation visit to studios (2 1/2 hours).

March 26, 2000, Friday from 1:45 - 3:45 PM: observation visit to studios, first photos (2 hours).

March 29, 2000, Monday from 1 PM - 3:30 PM: observation visit to studios (2 1/2 hours).

March 31, 2000, Wednesday from 1 - 3:30 PM: observation visit with photos (2 1/2 hours).

June 2, 2000, Friday from 10:30 AM - noon: first official interview with Ginette, also discussion about Consent Form (1 1/2 hours).

June 6, 2000, Tuesday from 9:30 AM to noon: observation visit to studios (2 1/2 hours).

### **Period with dancers rehearsing repertoire for summer tour**

August 1, 2000, Tuesday from 3:30 - 5:30 PM: observing rehearsal in O'Vertigo studios (2 hours).

August 2, 2000, Wednesday from 3 - 5:30 PM: observing rehearsal in O'Vertigo studios (2 1/2 hours); fieldnote write-up next morning.

August 4, 2000, Friday from 2:30 - 5:00 PM: observing rehearsal in O'Vertigo studios (2 1/2 hours); first contact with Jacob's Pillow staff.

August 7, 2000, Monday from 4 - 5 PM: short visit to O'Vertigo studios (1 hour); spent the afternoon planning survey methodology for Jacob's Pillow with their publicist and outside consultant.

August 9, 2000, Wednesday from 3 - 5 PM: observing final rehearsals before tour in O'Vertigo studios (2 hours); long talk with Jacob's Pillow publicist.

(August 10, 2000, Thursday at 3 PM: visit to O'Vertigo studios aborted, no one seems to be there!; the company has already left for New York City performance.)

August 11-15: planning for trip to Jacob's Pillow; Pillow staff decides that I can't do audience survey.

### Period at Jacob's Pillow

August 16, 2000, Wednesday: 6 PM arrival at Jacob's Pillow; settle in to lodgings and intense observation and note-taking; speak with Ginette Laurin at opening night reception and she introduces her composer; fieldnote write-up next afternoon in archive room.

August 17, 2000, Thursday: full day at the Pillow; numerous informal discussions; formal interview with Norton Owen, the Pillow preservationist; design first demographic questionnaire for focus groups and interviews; pre-show talk with Phillip Szporer and watch the performance and audience; attempt first focus group with staff; fieldnote write-up the next afternoon in archive room.

August 18, 2000, Friday: full day at the Pillow; session with Connie on survey forms and Pillow audience survey 1998; first in-depth discussion with two audience members at Pillow Pub; fieldnote write-up (very long notes!) is partially done the next morning, but some is delayed until early the next week.

August 19, 2000, Saturday: Berkshire Community Day at the Pillow; I do "head and tail" counting for Connie; Phillip Szporer and Ginette Laurin have a public discussion about her work that I record on tape; audience focus group succeeds with nine people; interview with Jan Greiner, the wardrobe mistress at the Pillow.

August 20, 2000, Sunday: last brief visit to Pillow; take a few last photos, tie up administrative ends, and say goodbye.

### Period of the creative process for the new work at O Vertigo studios

September 6, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30 - 5 PM: discussion with Bernard about touring schedule, observation of creative process for new work.

September 8, 2000, Friday from 3:30 - 5 PM: observation of the creative process; fieldnote notebook prepared and placed in the studios for all to read and comment.

September 13, 2000, Wednesday from 4-5 PM: only one hour, but very full, of observation of creative process with optical lenses. Antje and Ken read my fieldnote book over the weekend.

September 15, 2000, Friday from 1:30 to 4:30 PM: long session, revision of material developed during the week's creative sessions.

September 16, 2000, Saturday from 11 AM to 2 PM: auditions for a male dancer in the Lalala studios.

September 20, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30 to 5 PM: Creative process in O Vertigo studios; composer is there.

September 22, 2000, Friday from 1:30 to 5 PM: Creative process in O Vertigo studios: graphic artist is there.

September 25, 2000, Monday from 3-5 PM: Creative process in O Vertigo studios; copious analysis in Tuesday morning write-up.

September 27, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30-5 PM: Extraordinary creative process; the spontaneously choreographed solos.

September 30, 2000, Friday from 3-5 PM: Journées de la Culture at the O Vertigo studios; first audience interview and photos.

October 2, 2000, Monday from 3-5 PM: first sense of a "routine fieldwork day" with creative process in O Vertigo studios.

October 4, 2000, Wednesday from 1:30 to 3:30 PM: creative process and the first time I hear Ginette providing motivation for a movement sequence (the gestural solos).

October 6, 2000, Friday from 3-5 PM: creative session with a men's duet all afternoon, mechanical work and power insights; Kha joins the company.

October 11, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30-6 PM: Walter Heun is visiting and we spoke about Lucerne; run-thru of many sections with lenses and dress.

October 13, 2000, Friday from 3-5 PM: creative session; visit from Monique Léger of Canada Council; Ginette integrates my voice reading from fieldnotes into the rehearsal.

October 16, 2000, Monday from 3:30-5 PM: rehearsing a long section of Luna, just being put together.

October 18, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30-5 PM: rehearsing a long section of Luna, just begin put together.

October 20, 2000, Friday from 4-5:30 PM: rehearsing some new material of Luna; run-thru for staff and costumers yesterday for the first time; first visit to women's dressing room.

October 23, 2000, Monday from 3:30-5 PM: rehearsal with the women and spontaneous creation of a new gestural section; I am asked to participate by reading the text for the women's practice session.

October 26, 2000, Thursday from 10-12 PM: first technical rehearsal with Axel Morgenthelar trying out the effects of projected film and lenses under the large silk skirt.

November 1, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30-5 PM: a complete run-through of all material created to date, 55".

November 3, 2000, Friday from 3:30-5 PM: intimate work session at O Vertigo with Raymond and three men on duets with Ken and Kha, coached by David; short interviews about how they remember movement.

November 8, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30-5 PM: just after a run-through, giving notes and working with Axel on video images projected on backs.

November 10, 2000, Friday from 3:30-5 PM: same as Wednesday, just at the tail end of a run-through, giving notes, and working on problem spots.

November 15, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30-5 PM: lively, multi-centred work session.

November 20, 2000, Monday from 3:30-5 PM: working on new material, and new dance floor laid down.

November 22, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30-5 PM: relaxed working session, and preparations for CINARS.

November 28-Dec. 2, 2000: CINARS marketplace; afternoon at O Vertigo booth, photos; O Vertigo showcase at their studios, six interviews with Antje and five producers (5 hours).

December 4, 2000, Monday from 4-5 PM: new material being created in a playful working session.

December 6, 2000, Wednesday from 3:30-5 PM: run-through of new section and notes; interview with Isabelle, the apprentice.

December 8, 2000, Friday from 3:30-5 PM: run-through with new material, and working on problem sections.

December 11, 2000, Monday from 3:30 PM-5 PM: working session to develop new material with lenses and fire.

December 13, 2000, Wednesday from 4-5:30 PM: end of run-through at O Vertigo. Very short session. Interview with Myriam Farger, David Rose's girlfriend.

December 15, 2000, Friday from 2-5:30 PM: longest session, watched entire run-through of *Luna*. Alain's birthday, chat with Carmen.

December 18, 2000, Monday from 3-5 PM: last day of fieldwork during creative process in studio. Interview with Patrick Lamothe in a café.

(January 4-10, 2001, Thursday thru Wednesday: O Vertigo has a technical residency at the Maison de la Culture Mercier for one week, but I went to Danse à Lille and did not attend this phase.)

(January 13-February 22, 2001: first tour of *Luna* to Lucerne and Düsseldorf; I didn't travel because of so few public performances so spread out in time; two weeks residency in the theatre, 4 performances in Lucerne over 2 weekends and 2 performances in Düsseldorf.)

(February 24, 2001, Saturday: Montreal performance of a 10 minute excerpt of new work in the dance gala at the Salle Willfred Pelletier in Place des Arts of the Festival Montréal en Lumière; I didn't attend.)

March 1, 2001, Thursday from 12:30-4:30 PM: rehearsal in preparation for the filming of *Luna* at the O Vertigo studios; second rehearsal on March 2.

March 3, 2001, Saturday from 1-5 PM: filming of *Luna* at the Maison de la Culture Mercier for purposes of touring propection; after this filming, the dancers are officially on vacation for four months.

### **Period of the O Vertigo summer workshop 2001**

August 8, 2001, Wednesday from 2-3:30 PM: repertory class with Anne Barry and Chi Long in the Piscine-Théâtre with 12 students; four short interviews with students.

August 10, 2001, Friday from 2-3:30 PM: repertory class with Anne Barry in the Piscine-Théâtre with 11 students; two short interviews with out-of-town students, and proposal to meet some of the others for dinner next week to tell them about the Montreal dance scene.

August 23, 2001, Wednesday at 4:30 PM: inpromptu chat with Ginette Laurin on the metro.

August 24, 2001, Friday from 8-10:30 PM: informal performances of students from the O Vertigo summer workshop with material from *Luna*.



**Tour to Chicoutimi**

September 14, 2001, Friday from 2-5 PM: preparatory rehearsals at the O Vertigo studios of Luna for the Festival de nouvelle danse performances in a week.

September 22, 2001, Saturday: afternoon showcase of two young choreographers from France; an evening spent backstage and in the wings from 7:30-11 PM with O Vertigo at the Du Maurier theatre at their 9 PM opening night performance at the Festival de nouvelle danse; (audience focus group after the performance).

September 23, 2001, Sunday: second night backstage from 7:30 PM-11 PM and in the audience for the second and last performance at 9 PM of O Vertigo at the Festival de nouvelle danse; (audience focus group after the performance).

November 3 and 4, 2001, Saturday and Sunday: two days of bus travel and intensive fieldwork with O Vertigo in Chicoutimi at the set-up and performance in the Auditorium DuFour at the CEGEP de Chicoutimi (12 hours).

March 7, 2002, Wednesday: last fieldwork visit to O Vertigo studios, and final interview with Ginette. (2 hours)

October 12, 2002, Saturday from 7:30-10PM: last fieldwork attendance at a Luna performance, second run at the Monument National in Montréal.

**Total hours in the field: 133.5 plus 5 days at Jacob's Pillow (approximately 250 hours in all) from April 7, 2001 through October 12, 2002, 19 months.**



## APPENDIX D

Detailed log of *Luna* focus groups and interviews

## Detailed log of *Luna* focus groups and interviews

### Focus groups

August 16, 2001, Thursday at 5 PM: Focus group with 10 students attending the *O Vertigo* summer workshop at Le Commensal restaurant on St-Denis.

September 22 and 23, 2001 at 10 PM: Two audience focus groups, with 6 and 7 members respectively, during their two-night run at the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*, in a café area of the Monument National after the performances.

November 3, 2001, Saturday at 9:30 PM: Audience focus group, with 10 members, in Chicoutimi after the performance at Auditorium Dufour, in a café area of the foyer.

### Interviews

July 8, 1998: Exploratory interview with dance scholar, writer and journalist Philip Szporer in my office at Tangente.

July 9, 1998: Exploratory interview with Mélanie Demers, choreographer and *O Vertigo* dancer in the Laboratory room at the *Agora de la danse* during the *Danse à Lille* symposium.

August 5, 1998: Exploratory interview with company dancer David Rose at my office in Tangente; 30".

August 19, 2000: Public interview between Ginette Laurin and Phillip Szporer at Jacob's Pillow, Mass. just before a performance.

August 27, 1998: Exploratory interview with Linde Howe-Beck, professional dance journalist, at her home.

June 12, 1999: Interview with Joann Kealiinohomoku, dance anthropologist, at a restaurant in Albuquerque, New Mexico during a meeting of the Society for Dance History Scholars.

September 30, 2000: Interview with audience members Yves Guy Roy and Estelle Gascon at the *O Vertigo* studios during the *Journées de la Culture*; and also several shorter interviews with 3 other audience members.

June 2, 2000, Friday: First interview with Ginette Laurin, choreographer and artistic director, by appointment, in the kitchen of *O Vertigo*; mainly biographical and motives; 20-25".

December 2, 2000, Saturday at 4 PM: Interviews following the CINARS showcase with Antje, company dancer, and dance presenters Nick Stuccie, Gyorgy Szabo, Aldo Grompone, Hank Boerhol, and Ralph Schluter.

December 6, 2000, Wednesday at 5:15 PM: Interview with Isabelle Greaves, dancer apprentice, after rehearsal at the *Marché de Maisonneuve*, 20".

December 8, 2000, Friday at 5:30 PM: Interview with Kha Nygen, *O Vertigo* dancer, on the Ontario bus between the studios and St-Denis, 25".

December 13, 2000, Wednesday at 5 PM: Interview with Myriam Farger, dancer and girlfriend of company dancer David Rose, at the *O Vertigo* studios; 20".

December 18, 2000, Monday at 5:30 PM: Interview with new company dancer Patrick Lamothe in a café; 35-40".

March 1, 2001, Thursday at 4 PM: Informal short discussions (3-5") at the end of rehearsal in the *O Vertigo* studios with several of the dancers (Patrick Lamothe, Mélanie Demers, Donald Weikart, Chi Long, Kha Nyugen and Antje Riede) about the tour to Europe.

March 10, 2001, Friday at 12:30 PM: Interview with Stefan Schwartz from *Tanzhaus Die Werkstatt* in Düsseldorf, during the Charleroi-danse showcase in Brussels in the *Raffinerie*, about the *O Vertigo* premiere in his theatre.

March 30, 2001, Friday at 12 PM: Interview with Jocelyn Proulx, technical director of *O Vertigo* in the kitchen of their studios; 50-55".

May 4, 2001, Friday at 4 PM: Interview with Bernard Lagacé, general director of *O Vertigo* in his office; 45".

June 11, 2001, Monday at 9 AM: Interview with Denis Lavoie, costume designer in my office near his workshop: 60".

July 24, 2001, Tuesday at 11 AM: Interview with Claude Gosselin, administrator (board of directors) of *O Vertigo* at his home on rue Laval near St-Louis Square: 55-60".

August 24, 2001, Thursday: Interview with Marie-Claude Rodrigue, dancer with *O Vertigo*, in my office at Tangente.

August 28, 2001: Interview with Line Lanthier, Dance Section Coordinator for the *Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec*, in a meeting room at her workplace.

September 19, 2001 at 6 PM: Interview with Antje Reade, *O Vertigo* dancer, at Café Cherrier and just before we went to a show together at FIND

October 25, 2001, Thursday at 6 PM: Interview with Martin Wexler, dance programming director at The Joyce Theater in NYC, in the green room near his office.

October 31, 2001: Interview with Iro Tembeck, historian, critic, educator, in her office at the Dance Department of the *Université du Québec*.

December 19, 2001, Wednesday at 4:30 PM: Interview with Diane Boucher, executive director and programmer for the *Festival international de la nouvelle danse*, at La Brûlerie café on St-Denis.

January 28, 2002, at 5:30 PM: Interview with Axel Morgenthelar, visual designer with *O Vertigo* in his office and loft in Old Montreal.

February 6, 2002 in the afternoon: Interview with Lise Clément, conseillère en communication for the performance of *O Vertigo* at Auditorium Dufour in Chicoutimi, in my mother's apartment in Montreal.

March 4, 2002, 5:15 – 6 PM, interview with Raymond Brisson, accompagnateur (répétiteur) et Anne Barry, dancer/interprète from *O Vertigo*, at Café Rico on Rachel.

March 7, 2002, 1 PM: Final interview with Ginette Laurin, choreographer and artistic director of *O Vertigo*, in her office at the *O Vertigo* studios; 30".

April 11, 2002, Thursday: Interview with Stéphanie Brody, *chroniquer de danse*, at Tangente.

May 2, 2002: Interview with Pierre Chartrand, *intervenant en danse*, choreographer, researcher in traditional dance, at my home.

May 3 & 5, 2002: Interview responses by email from Walter Heun, dance producer with Joint Adventures and artistic director of *Lucerntanz*.

## APPENDIX E

**Audience and dance student focus group survey forms**

**Very short socio-cultural survey of focus group participants:**  
**(all questions are optional and to be answered only if you wish)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ F\_\_ or M\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation(s)/vocation(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Current place of residence \_\_\_\_\_  
 Is it rural \_\_\_\_\_ or urban \_\_\_\_\_ or suburban \_\_\_\_\_?

Estimated annual income \$0-15,000 \_\_\_\_ \$15-30,000 \_\_\_\_ \$30-45,000 \_\_\_\_ 45,000+ \_\_\_\_

Highest level of education and/or training  
 some high school \_\_\_\_ high school diploma \_\_\_\_ CEGEP \_\_\_\_  
 academy or technical training school \_\_\_\_: specialization \_\_\_\_  
 some college or university \_\_\_\_: major(s) \_\_\_\_  
 college or university diploma \_\_\_\_: level/major(s) \_\_\_\_  
 other specialized trainings (describe): \_\_\_\_\_

How do you describe your ethnic or cultural identity? \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
**Courte enquete socio-culturelle des participants du "focus group":**  
**(tous ces questions sont optionelles; répondez seulement si vous désirez...)**

Nom \_\_\_\_\_ F\_\_ or M\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Type de travail/vocation(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Lieu de residence \_\_\_\_\_  
 Est-ce que c'est un lieu rural \_\_\_\_\_ urban \_\_\_\_\_ ou en banlieu \_\_\_\_\_?

Revenu annuel approximatif \$0-15,000 \_\_\_\_ \$15-30,000 \_\_\_\_ \$30-45,000 \_\_\_\_ plus \_\_\_\_

Plus haut niveau d'éducation et/ou d'entraînement:  
 secondaire pas complété \_\_\_\_ diplôme secondaire \_\_\_\_ CEGEP \_\_\_\_  
 académie ou institut professionnel \_\_\_\_: specialization \_\_\_\_  
 collège ou université pas complété \_\_\_\_: majeur(s) \_\_\_\_  
 diplôme d'un collège ou d'une université \_\_\_\_: majeur(s) \_\_\_\_  
 autres types d'entraînement: \_\_\_\_\_

De quelle façon est-ce que vous décrivez votre ethnicité ou appartenance à une  
 ou des groupes "culturelles"? \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX F

*Luna* program offered to spectators  
during the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*

<10e édition >> 19.09 > 6.10.2001>

**Festival**  
International de Nouvelle  
**danse legrandlabo**  
corps son image\_body sound image

**overtigo > Luna (2001)**

Salle Ludger Duvernay - Monument National  
22-23 SEPT 2001 - 21 h

chorégraphie\_*Ginette Laurin*  
danseurs\_*Anne Barry, Mélanie Demers, Kenneth Gould,*  
*Patrick Lamothe, Chi Long, Anna Riede,*  
*Marie-Claude Rodrigue, David Rosè, Donald Weikert*

répétiteur\_*Raymond Brisson*  
scénographie et éclairages\_*Axel Morgenthaler*  
conception sonore\_*Larsen Lupin avec Ginette Laurin*  
costumes\_*Carmen Alié, Denis Lavoie de Trac Costume (Montréal)*  
coproduction\_*O Vertigo, Luzerntanz am Luzernertheater et Fido*

musique\_*Emigrate, West, Fratricide de Peter Scherer (Chronologia, © 1996 Tzadik)*

*Prélude de Karl Friedrich Abel, arr. Jordi Savall,*  
*Aria Burlesca de Johannes Schenck, arr. Jordi Savall,*  
*Les Voix Humaines de Marin Marais, arr. Jordi Savall,*  
*Harke, Harke de Tobias Hume (Les Voix Humaines, © 1998 Alia Vox)*

*Entain de Vladislav Delay (Entain, © 2000 Mille Plateaux, licence Éditions Sigma 1999)*

*Genrecide (I wish Tricky'd die any way I hope) de Terre Thaemlitz,*  
*Between the Jolts were Gritty Regions de Lithops,*  
*(1:5)2 de SND,*

*Doppelpack de T. Brinkmann,*  
*Polyfoto 1a-1 de Noto (Modulation et Transformation 4, © 1999 Mille Plateaux)*

*Canta de David Cunningham (Century XXI UK A-M, © 1996 Felmay)*

*Clairvoyance de Neina (Clicks & Cuts, © 2000 Mille Plateaux)*

*Judicii Signum de Anonymous 4 (1000, A Mass For The End Of Time, © Harmonia Mundi)*

*Siemens.Bioport (Live Edit) de Gramm (Staedtitzism, © -scape, EFA)*

création\_31 janvier 2001, luzernertheater, Lucerne (Suisse)

durée\_1 h 15 sans intermission

Et puis un soir elle m'est apparue. Debout, face au public, elle bougeait, vibrail, réfléchit, échappée, tel un souffle naissant qui s'invente pour la première fois. Le corps de Ginette Laurin virevoltait par à-coups, sa longue chevelure rythmait l'espace, enveloppait une respiration que son corps libérait. Ses bras s'élançaient, parallèles, parfois se repliaient, contrepont et contrepoids dialoguant avec le reste du corps. Son visage libre et attentif, semblait écouter chaque mouvement, surpris dans sa propre volée, baigné d'ombres et de sueur, d'humilité et d'audace. Ce soir de 1978, elle dansait Dédale de Françoise Sullivan, une œuvre de 1948.

Qu'y avait-il au bout de ces gestes? Une observation? Un étonnement? Une invitation à s'enivrer? Un besoin d'errance? Sans doute sommeillait, encore insoupçonnée, l'œuvre à venir de la chorégraphe: de Sept fois passera (1979) à La Vie qui bat (1999) en passant par Crash Landing, Full House, Chagall, La Chambre Blanche ou La Bête. Soit une quarantaine de créations. En 1984, elle crée sa propre compagnie, O Vertigo: "Ma danse, dit-elle, est le vertige, l'attrait du vide, la frénésie, une émotion en chute libre." En dansant Dédale, elle a transcendé son propre labyrinthe, remonté son fil d'Ariane, pour magnifier les vertiges de son être.

Se rapprocher au plus près du corps humain, capter ses moindres frémissements, sentir sa vulnérabilité semble être la voie qu'elle explore maintenant. Ses dernières œuvres en témoignent: En Dedans, Duos, La Vie qui bat. Des titres qui évoquent la proximité, l'intimité, le besoin de recueillir le secret de l'autre. Ces gestes, ces regards, l'abandon multiple des retenues et petites censures, muent les confidences du corps, déplient la carte des zones d'ombres, soulignent ses rythmes, éclairent les fulgurances à venir pour nous les offrir vivifiés, revisités.

Sa nouvelle création ira au cœur de cette méditation. Des lentilles de verre grossissant, placées sur la scène, telles les phases de la lune, donneront aux danseurs, la possibilité d'une rencontre singulière. Chacun aura l'impression de danser revêtu d'une loupe, révélant une image à la fois exacte et anamorphique de son corps, de ses expressions. Cette matière transparente, généreux faisceaux sensoriels, invitera le danseur à franchir une ligne invisible: celle en soi, fragile, limitée, tissée d'infimes débordements, n'attendant que le déplacement d'une écoute authentique pour remodeler sa forme rigide. Se mettre à nu est parfois plus exigeant qu'être nu. Ainsi, danser avec le germe de sa propre révélation sera peut-être une façon de s'élever davantage, d'aller au plus près de soi à travers le regard vibratoire de l'autre.

Si le mystère du corps humain réussit à toucher le cristallin de son dévoilement, peut-être y aura-t-il en nous un peu plus de lumière. Pour moi l'art de Ginette Laurin offre cette illumination.

— Rober Racine, 2000

And then one evening she appeared. Standing, in front of an audience, moving, vibrating, reflecting fugitive, like a breath of air drawn for the first time. In fits and starts, Ginette Laurin's body spun round and round, her long tresses punctuating the space, enveloping the breath that her body liberated. Her arms soared upwards, parallel, sometimes folded, a counterpoint and counterbalance, in dialogue with the rest of her body. Her face, unstrained and attentive, seemed to listen to every movement, caught up in its own acrobatics, bathed in shadows and sweat, humility and daring. That night in 1978 she performed Françoise Sullivan's Dédale, a work from 1948.

What was conveyed by these gestures? An observation? An amazement? An invitation to feel exhilarated, intoxicated? A wanderlust? The seeds of the choreographer's future works lay dormant there from Sept fois passera (1979) to La Vie qui bat (1999), by way of Crash Landing, Full House, Chagall, La Chambre Blanche and La Bête. Some forty creations. In 1984 she formed her own company O Vertigo: "My dance," she says, "is about vertigo, the allure of the abyss, exhilaration, free-fall emotion." In performing Dédale, she transcended her own labyrinth, rewound Ariadne's clew, magnified the vertigo of her own being.

To come as close as possible to the human body, to capture its slightest quivers; feel its vulnerability: this is the ground she is now exploring. Her latest works—En Dedans, Duos, La Vie qui bat—a testimony to this; their titles evoke closeness, inwardness, the need to hear the secrets of the other. These gestures and looks, the multiple surrender of restraints and censors transform the secrets of the body, unfold the map of dark zones, underscore its rhythms, clarify the piercing illuminations to come revisiting and revivifying them for us.

Her new work lies at the heart of this reflection. Magnifying glasses on stage, like phases of the moon provide the dancers with a potentially singular encounter. They will feel as if they are wearing magnifying glass as they dance, revealing an image of the body and its expressions that is at once precise and anamorphic. This transparent material with its myriad sensory rays invites the dancer to cross an invisible line: that within the self, a fragile limit woven with infinitesimal transgressions, waiting for a genuine act of listening to assume its original form. Stripping naked is sometimes more exacting than being naked. Dancing with the seed of one's own revelation will thus perhaps be a way of ascending further, of exploring one's innermost being through the vibratory gaze of the other.

If the mystery of the human body meets the crystalline clarity of its unveiling, perhaps there will be more light within us. For me, the art of Ginette Laurin offers this illumination.

— Rober Racine, 2000

O Vertigo, c'est d'abord GINETTE Laurin. Depuis le début de sa carrière en tant que chorégraphe il y a plus de quinze ans, GINETTE Laurin s'est imposée comme l'une des cheffes de file de la danse montréalaise. Avec plus de quarante créations à son actif, elle figure parmi les artistes qui se distinguent par un renouvellement du langage chorégraphique actuel. Sa danse est inventive, risquée, bavardée et teintée de théâtralité. Sa formation de gymnaste, son insatiable appétit du mouvement, le plaisir qu'elle éprouve à placer le corps en situation limite lui permettent d'étendre le vocabulaire des portées, des chutes et des envois à un univers chorégraphique qui lui appartient en propre. Elle en extrait des sens multiples - un véritable parfum - l'essence d'une vision du monde et de ses tumultes.

O Vertigo, ce sont aussi des danseurs profondément impliqués dans le processus créatif, qui laissent l'empreinte de leurs fortes personnalités dans chaque œuvre. Tous pratiquent diverses formes d'entraînement et différentes disciplines artistiques qui viennent enrichir leur art. L'énergie indéfectible qu'ils déploient sur la scène, leur grande polyvalence et leur connaissance presque parfaite du mouvement donnent à la danse son sens profond et intime.

La figure sculpturale d'Anne Barry et son sens inné de la théâtralité marquent les spectacles d'O Vertigo depuis 1991. Formée à l'école du Toronto Dance Theatre, Anne Barry obtient par la suite une bourse de perfectionnement et séjourne à Londres, à New York et à Paris. Elle a travaillé également avec Montréal Danse et la Compagnie Marie Chouinard.

Kenneth Gould est l'un des membres fondateurs d'O Vertigo. Sa verve acrobatique se retrouve dans presque tous les spectacles. Après des études en ballet et en danse moderne, il travaille avec la Brian Webb Dance Company d'Edmonton et Dancemakers de Toronto. Ses propres chorégraphies ont été présentées au Canada, au Japon et au Mexique. De 1988 à 1997, il enseigne au Cégep Lionel-Groulx et à l'École nationale de théâtre du Canada. On a pu le voir en janvier dans *Danse maintenant!* à Télé-Québec.

De 1987 à 1990, Chi Long travaille avec le Canberra Dance Theatre en Australie. En 1991, elle s'installe à Montréal et participe aux créations d'artistes indépendants tels Jane Mappin, William Douglas, Sarah Bild et récemment José Navas. On peut d'ailleurs la voir dans une chorégraphie de Navas dans le film *Lodola* de Philippe Bayleucq. Vive, racée et sensuelle, Chi Long danse avec O Vertigo depuis son arrivée dans la *Chambre blanche* en 1991.

Jeune talent de la relève, Mélanie Demers se joint à O Vertigo en 1998. Elle a étudié à l'École de danse de Québec et aux Ateliers de danse moderne de Montréal. En 1996, elle présentait Les Oubliettes à Tangente et au Danse-midi du FID. Elle a travaillé avec Paula de Vasconcelos (Montréal Danse) et Roger Sinha. Elle danse dans Impressions, un film de Benar Hébert et Benoît Pilon, diffusé à Bravo! et à la SRC (chorégraphie de Danièle Desnoyers).

Diplômée des Ateliers de danse moderne de Montréal en 1995, Patrick Lamothe s'est joint à O Vertigo tout récemment. Il a travaillé comme interprète avec Jean-Pierre Perreault, Harold Rhéaume, Lucie Boissinot, Jean-Pierre Mondor et Mélanie Demers. Créatif, il présente son travail chorégraphique dès les débuts de sa carrière à Tangente ainsi qu'au Festival international de nouvelle danse dans le cadre des Danses Mûres. Il a enseigné au Cégep du Vieux-Montréal et à l'Université de Montréal.

D'origine allemande, Anna Riede a étudié le mouvement, l'improvisation et la chorégraphie à Fribourg au *Bewegungs-art-Freiburg*. Elle a travaillé avec le *Bewegungs Art II* et avec le *Passion-Tanz-Theater*. Elle s'établit à New York en 1996 et y fonde un groupe d'improvisation, *Nûnatak*, avec Yoko Yamanaka. Depuis 1993, elle présente régulièrement son travail et celui de *Nûnatak* en Allemagne et aux États-Unis. Anna s'est jointe à O Vertigo en 1999, après avoir participé au premier stage d'été de la compagnie.

O Vertigo est first and foremost GINETTE Laurin. Since beginning her career as a choreographer more than fifteen years ago, GINETTE Laurin has established herself as one of the leading figures of the Montreal dance scene. Some thirty works to her credit, she is among those artists who receive great recognition for their renewal of the choreographic language. Her dance is inventive, risky, loquacious, and tinged with theatricality. Her training as a gymnast, her insatiable appetite for movement, and the obvious pleasure she derives from confronting the body limits have led her to develop a prolific and unique style, one that renews the vocabulary of lifts, tumbles and leaps. These multiple-meaning movements create the essence of a vision of life and its turmoil.

O Vertigo is also unique dancers, engaged fully in the creative process, who deeply mark each work with their strong personalities. Their training in various physical disciplines is extensive, and all pursue different artistic goals which nourish their art. Their unflagging energy in performance and their great versatility, combined with a knowledge of movement that verges on perfection, give their dancing a deep and intimate meaning.

Founded in 1984, O Vertigo is renowned on the national and international scene. The company has toured extensively and has been invited to perform in Québec, Canada, the United States, Europe, Brazil, Mexico, Israel and Japan - thus contributing to the reputation Montreal has gained as a focal point in the world of dance today.

Anne Barry's sculptural shape and innate dramatic sense have been a hallmark of O Vertigo's performances since 1991. She trained at the Toronto Dance Theatre school. A scholarship allowed her to further her training in London, New York and Paris, after which she worked with Montréal Danse and Compagnie Marie Chouinard.

Kenneth Gould is one of the founding members of O Vertigo. He has left his dynamic mark on almost all the company's productions. From 1979 to 1984, he danced with the Brian Webb Dance Company in Edmonton, and with Dancemakers in Toronto. He choreographed fifteen works which have been performed in Canada, Japan and recently, in Mexico. From 1988 to 1997, he was also a dance teacher at Cégep Lionel-Groulx and at the National Theatre School of Canada. Ken dances in *Danse maintenant!*, a documentary broadcasted by Télé-Québec in January 1999.

Chi Long was born in Australia and began her career with the Canberra Dance Theatre (1987-1990). In 1991, she moved to Montreal, and worked with a number of independent choreographers, including Jane Mappin, William Douglas, Sarah Bild and José Navas. She can be seen in the beautiful film *Lodola* by Philippe Bayleucq, choreographed by José Navas. Strong, naturally elegant and sensuous, Chi Long has been with O Vertigo since *La Chambre blanche* in 1991.

One of the promising young talent in Québec, Mélanie Demers joined O Vertigo in 1998. She studied at l'École de danse de Québec and graduated in Les Ateliers de danse moderne de Montréal in 1995. She has also worked with Paula de Vasconcelos (Montréal Danse) and Roger Sinha. She dances in Impressions, a film directed by Benar Hébert and Benoît Pilon (choreographies by Danièle Desnoyers). Since 1996, her works are regularly presented at Tangente and as part of *Vue sur la relève* in Montréal.

Patrick Lamothe graduated from Les Ateliers de danse moderne de Montréal in 1995 and joined Vertigo at the beginning of this year. He has worked with Jean-Pierre Perreault, Harold Rhéaume, Lucie Boissinot, Jean-Pierre Mondor and Mélanie Demers. He has presented his work from the outset of his career at Tangente and Danse Mûre, an event which takes place within the framework of the Festival international de nouvelle danse. He has taught at Vieux-Montréal College, as well as the Université de Montréal.

Anna Riede was born in Germany. She first studied movement education, improvisation and choreography at *Bewegungs-art-Freiburg*. She later worked with *Bewegungs Art II* and with the *Passion-Tanz-Theater*. She moved to New York City in 1996 where she founded her own improvisation dance company *Nûnatak*, with Yoko Yamanaka. She has performed her own work and that of *Nûnatak* in Germany and the United States. Gentle and a little mischievous, Anna joined O Vertigo in 1998, after having participated to the company's first summer dance workshop.

## Équipe de production

Direction technique et régie d'éclairage : Jocelyn Proulx

Direction de production : Yvon Baril

Régie de plateau : Alain Ouellette

Régie son : Onil Brousseau

Costumière : Danielle Lecourtois

Réalisation des costumes : Angelika Hebelisen (chef d'atelier au luzernertheater)

Réalisation du tapis de scène : Jo-Anne Vézina, Longue-vue peinture scénique

Réalisation des lentilles grossissantes et du tulle : Ingo Hôhn (chef d'atelier au luzernertheater)

Montage vidéo : Patrice Duhamel, Axel Morgensthaler

Programmation du vidéo sur Pi : Marc Lavallée

Voix des textes pré-enregistrés : Anne Barry, Mélanie Demers, Kenneth Gould, Patrick Lamothe, Chi Lor.

Anna Riede, Marie-Claude Rodrigue, David Rose, Donald Weikert

Studio d'enregistrement : Studio Larsen Lupin

Photographies : Benoît Aquin, Laurent Ziegler et George Anderhub

L'un des textes pré-enregistrés est extrait de *Poussières d'étoiles* de Hubert Reeves, Éditions du Seuil,

## O Vertigo

Directrice artistique et chorégraphe : Ginette Laurin

Directeur général : Bernard Lagacé

Directeur administratif : Éric-Abel Baland

Directrice des Communications : Sylvie Ménard

Secrétaire/réceptionniste : Cléo Myers

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Ginette Laurin tient à remercier Walter Heun du Luzerntheater, Claude Théorêt, Isabelle Greaves, Michel Febvre, Geneviève Cadieux et Devora Newmark. Elle tient également à souligner la généreuse contribution de tous ses danseurs à sa recherche chorégraphique.

O Vertigo remercie le Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec, le Conseil des Arts du Canada, le Cor des arts de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal et FIDO de leur précieux appui financier ainsi que la Mai de la culture Mercier, Marc Lavallée et Elisabeth Coingard. La compagnie souhaite également reconnaître la contribution de ses généreux donateurs.

Marie-Claude Rodrigue trained originally as a figure skater before studying dance education at the Université du Québec à Montréal and at Les Ateliers de danse moderne de Montréal. She won a scholarship to train in Madrid, Barcelona and Paris. She joined O Vertigo in 1991 where her Latin spirit permeates each of her performances. She was also involved in the creation of *Exodos*, la trilogie by Michel Monty (1997 Festival de Théâtre des Amériques). At Tangente, she also danced in *Falla* by Patricia Perez.

David Rose made his professional début in his home town with the Philadelphia Dance Company in 1985. He has worked in New York with the Milton Myers Dance Company, in Winnipeg with Contemporary Dancers, and in Montreal with the Fondation Jean-Pierre Perreault, among other companies. His characteristic combination of mellowness and energy drew the attention of Ginette Laurin, who recruited him in 1996. He has danced with Danse-Cité in 1994-1995 (in works by Jeanne Renaud and Paul-André Fortier) and also choreographed a solo presented at Tangente in 1997. He was part of the original cast of *En Dedans* in 1997.

Donald Weikert's background departs somewhat from the norm. Born in Boston, he moved to Montreal to study biology, but instead, shifted his focus to dance. He studied classical ballet with Renald Rabu and Marie-Josée Hardy, and modern dance with Linda Rabin. In 1986, after earning a Bachelor of Science degree from McGill University, he began his career as a professional dancer with Ginette Laurin. He spent the next ten years with La La La Human Steps. In 1990, he performed in David Bowie's *Sound and Vision* with Louise Lecavalier. In 1992, he took part in Frank Zappa's *The Yellow Shark* concert with the German Ensemble Modern. He returned to O Vertigo in 1997.

Formée en patinage artistique, Marie-Claude Rodrigue étudie ensuite au Département de danse de l'UQAM et aux Ateliers de danse moderne de Montréal. Une bourse lui permet de se perfectionner à Barcelone, Paris et Madrid. Elle se joint à O Vertigo en 1991 où sa fougue et son côté latin font vibrer chacune de ses interprétations. Elle a participé à la création de *Exodos*, la trilogie, de Michel Monty (Festival de Théâtre des Amériques 1997). Elle a aussi dansé dans *Falla* de Patricia Perez à Tangente.

David Rose a fait ses débuts dans sa ville natale avec la Philadelphia Dance Company en 1985. Il a dansé notamment à New York avec la Milton Myers Dance Company, à Winnipeg avec Contemporary Dancers, et à Montréal avec la Fondation Jean-Pierre Perreault. Le mélange de suavité et d'énergie qui le caractérise attire l'attention de Ginette Laurin qui le recrute en 1996. Il a aussi dansé à Danse-Cité en 1994-1995 (pour des œuvres de Jeanne Renaud et Paul-André Fortier), et il a signé un solo à Tangente en 1997. Il faisait partie de la distribution originale de *En Dedans* en 1997.

Un fait particulier que celui de Donald Weikert, acheteur en sciences de l'Université McGill. Né à Boston, il s'établit à Montréal pour y étudier la biologie mais se consacre plutôt à la danse. Il étudie le ballet avec Renald Rabu et Marie-Josée Hardy, et la danse moderne avec Linda Rabin. Il débute sa carrière avec Ginette Laurin, avant de devenir l'un des danseurs vedettes de La La La Human Steps. En 1990, il participe à *Sound and Vision* de David Bowie, avec Louise Lecavalier. En 1992, il prend part au concert *The Yellow Shark* de Frank Zappa, avec l'Ensemble modern d'Allemagne. Il est de retour à O Vertigo depuis 1997.



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## APPENDIX G

List of theaters who sponsored and presented *Luna*

# PRINCIPAUX THÉÂTRES ET FESTIVALS QUI ONT ACCUEILLI O VERTIGO

## MAJOR THEATRES AND FESTIVALS WHO HAVE PRESENTED O VERTIGO

Dance Umbrella (LONDRES)  
Luzernertheater (LUCERNE)  
Théâtre de Sartrouville (FRANCE)  
Stadsschouwburg (AMSTERDAM)  
Lucent Danstheater (LA HAYE - DEN HAAG)  
Festival Internacional Cervantino (GUANAJUATO, MEXICO)  
Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (MEXICO)  
Festival Berner Tanztage (BERNE)  
Festival Tanz Und Theatre International (HANOVRE)  
Teatro Municipal (SÃO PAULO)  
Teatro Carlos Gomes (RIO DE JANEIRO)  
Wiener Festwochen / Tanz 96 (VIENNE)  
Künstlerhaus Mousonturm (FRANCFORT)  
Salle Pierre-Mercure du Centre Pierre-Péladeau (MONTRÉAL)  
Schouwburg (ARNHEM)  
Tanzwerkstatt Europa (MUNICH)  
Petöfi Csarnok (Hall) (BUDAPEST)  
The South Bank Centre - Queen Elizabeth Hall (LONDRES)  
Festival de danse de Châteauvallon (FRANCE)  
Festival Roma per la Danza (ROME)  
Festival Bolzano Danza (BOLZANO)  
Festival Milano Oltre (MILAN)  
Festival Dancin'City (COPENHAGUE)  
Festival international de nouvelle danse (MONTRÉAL)  
Théâtre Maisonneuve, Place des Arts (MONTRÉAL)  
Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui (MONTRÉAL)  
Festival Danse Canada (OTTAWA)  
Benedum Center for the Performing Arts (PITTSBURGH)  
Harbourfront Centre, Premiere Dance Theatre (TORONTO)  
Salle Maurice O'Bready (SHERBROOKE)  
Grand Théâtre de Québec (QUÉBEC)  
Usine C (MONTRÉAL)  
The Joyce Theater (NEW YORK)  
Next Wave Festival (NEW YORK)  
UCLA Center for the Arts (LOS ANGELES)  
California Center for the Arts (ESCONDIDO)  
Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (MASSACHUSETTS)  
San Francisco Performances (SAN FRANCISCO)  
City Hall Theatre (HONG KONG)  
Parco Theatre (TOKYO)  
Victoria Theatre (SINGAPOUR)  
Israël Festival (JÉRUSALEM)  
La Rose des Vents (VILLENUEVE D'ASCO)  
Danse à Lille (LILLE)  
The Place (LONDRES)  
Mayfest (GLASGOW)  
Palais des Beaux-Arts (BRUXELLES)  
Festival Intercity (FLORENCE)  
Centre national des Arts (OTTAWA)  
Festival Danse à Aix (AIX)  
Festival Oriente Occidente (ROVERETO)  
De Warande (TURNHOUT)

« *Luna* is a most complex conceptual choreography, interpreted by character dancers. What came into being here, in the moonlight, is hypnotic intensity. »

Maya Künzler, *Basler Zeitung*  
Luzern, February 2nd, 2001

« ... fantastic images like those created by Goya and Füssli. »  
(Luna)

Jochen Schmidt,  
*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*  
Düsseldorf, February 8th, 2001

« *Luna* : 75 minutes of sensuality. »

Marlies Strech, *Tagess Anzeiger*  
Luzern, February 2nd, 2001

« Le public aime O Vertigo. Ça se voit et ça s'entend. À la fin du spectacle *La Vie qui bat*, la salle pleine s'est levée d'un bond pour applaudir... Cette fusion entre la musique live et la danse est un véritable cadeau du ciel. (...) »

Linda Boutin, *Voir*  
Montréal, 8-14 avril 1999

"A perfect marriage has produced sensational offspring. (...) Laurin's best among several masterpieces, *La Vie qui bat* contains too many vividly innovative and magical moments to enumerate (...) *La Vie qui bat* has to be seen to be believed."

Linde Howe-Beck, *The Gazette*  
Montreal, April 2, 1999

« Un spectacle impeccable et d'une délicate beauté. »  
(En Dedans)

Deirdre Kelly, *The Globe and Mail*  
Toronto, le 11 juin 1998

"It's mesmerizing. Over the years, Laurin has learned to modify her explosive vocabulary, and give her work more emotional subtlety. (...) It's no wonder the audience leapt to its feet: rarely do you see a piece that is so beautifully crafted and has such a distinctive choreographic voice."  
(En Dedans)

Shannon Rupp, *Ottawa Citizen*  
June 11, 1998

"It is a glorious mess, an outpouring of energetic images whose Goya-esque metaphors take flight toward the fantastic, away from the rational (...) For all its pure-movement interest, the choreography has a visceral edge, its images touching upon spiritual and physical pain. Here is its depth and richness."  
(*La Bête - The Beast Within*)

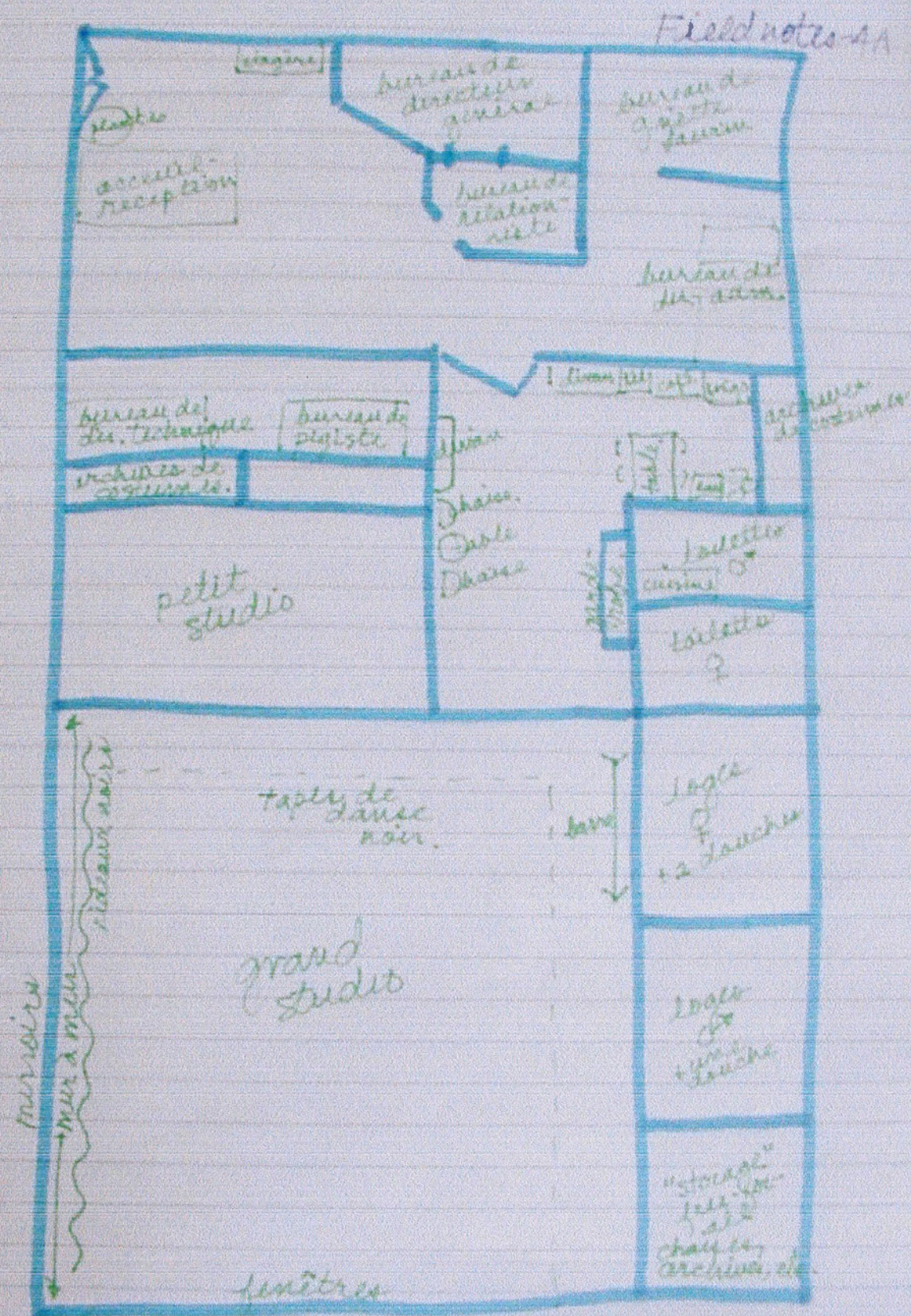
Anna Kisselgoff  
*The New York Times*, March 5, 1998

Festival Internacional Cervantino (GUANAJUATO, MEXICO) | Festival Berner Tanztage (BERNE) | Festival Tanz Und Theatre International (HANOVRE) | Teatro Municipal (SÃO PAULO) | Teatro Carlos Gomes (RIO DE JANEIRO) | Wiener Festwochen / Tanz 96 (VIENNE) | Künstlerhaus Mousonturm (FRANCFORT) | Schouwburg (ARNHEM) | Tanzwerkstatt Europa (MUNICH) | Petöfi Csarnok (Hall) (BUDAPEST) | The South Bank Centre - Queen Elizabeth Hall (LONDRES) | Festival de danse de Châteauvallon (FRANCE) | Festival Roma per la Danza (ROME) | Festival Bolzano Danza (BOLZANO) | Festival Milano Oltre (MILAN) | Festival Dancin'City (COPENHAGUE) | Festival international de nouvelle danse (MONTRÉAL) | Festival Danse Canada (OTTAWA) | Benedum Center for the Performing Arts (PITTSBURGH) | Harbourfront Centre, Premiere Dance Theatre (TORONTO) | Salle Maurice O'Bready (SHERBROOKE) | Grand Théâtre de Québec (QUÉBEC) | Usine C (MONTRÉAL) | The Joyce Theater (NEW YORK) | Next Wave Festival (NEW YORK) | UCLA Center for the Arts (LOS ANGELES) | California Center for the Arts (ESCONDIDO) | Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (MASSACHUSETTS) | San Francisco Performances (SAN FRANCISCO) | City Hall Theatre (HONG KONG) | Parco Theatre (TOKYO) | Victoria Theatre (SINGAPOUR) | Israël Festival (JÉRUSALEM) | La Rose des Vents (VILLENUEVE D'ASCO) | Danse à Lille (LILLE) | The Place (LONDRES) | Mayfest (GLASGOW) | Palais des Beaux-Arts (BRUXELLES) | Festival Intercity (FLORENCE) | Centre national des Arts (OTTAWA) | Festival Danse à Aix (AIX) | Festival Oriente Occidente (ROVERETO) | De Warande (TURNHOUT)

## APPENDIX H

My drawing in fieldnotes of the interior spaces  
of the *O Vertigo* home offices and studios







## APPENDIX I

The *Luna* project proposal, press release from Lucern premiere, and  
the company biography from press kit

## LE PROJET

Ginette Laurin compte avec ce projet développer une nouvelle approche du corps en mouvement, en mettant à profit les plus récents développements technologiques et scientifiques. Pour ce faire, elle souhaite s'entourer d'une équipe de collaborateurs constituée autant de scientifiques que de théoriciens afin d'alimenter le processus en cours. Cette phase de recherches et d'échanges interdisciplinaires vise à établir les points de convergence de l'œuvre.

Pour sa part, Axel Morgenthaler conviera une équipe de collaborateurs (techniciens et ingénieurs) à une période de recherche et de développement du dispositif technologique nécessaire à supporter la vision de Ginette Laurin : rendre le corps plus grand que nature.

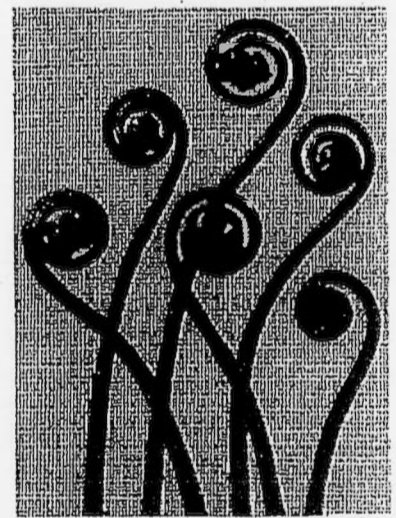
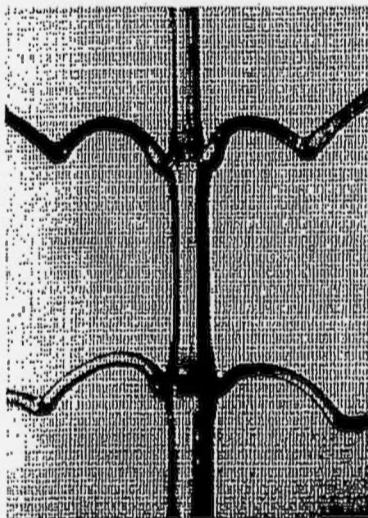
### Mot de la chorégraphe/directrice artistique • Ginette Laurin

Avec cette nouvelle création, j'aimerais poursuivre la recherche amorcée avec la chorégraphie *En Dedans*, une commande du Département de la culture de la capitale d'État Munich et une production de Joint Adventures créée en 1997.

Avec cette œuvre, j'explorais l'intimité du danseur en dévoilant, par le principe de déconstruction, la face cachée d'une chorégraphie. Mon regard s'est porté plus spécifiquement sur la mécanique engendrée par les manipulations dans les danses de duos (pas de deux). Cette gestuelle de contact entre deux danseurs est souvent camouflée pour donner à la danse une aura surnaturelle. En mettant en évidence cette mécanique qui a servi de canevas à la composition chorégraphique, j'articulais un langage où la dimension humaine ressortait avec force et insistance.

Alors qu'avec *En Dedans* je regardais à la loupe les mécanismes du pas de deux, j'aimerais avec ma nouvelle création m'approcher du corps du danseur telle une caméra qui effectue un lent *close-up* afin de donner une représentation plus kinesthésique de la chorégraphie. Je compte donc isoler certaines parties du corps pour m'attarder à la chorégraphie de ces segments souvent multipliés (danse pour neuf dos, danse pour trois bouches, etc.). C'est ici que les nouvelles technologies entrent en jeu, de façon à mieux segmenter, grossir et isoler les membres et mouvements du corps.

Cette œuvre, poétique et sensuelle, fera l'éloge du corps en offrant une danse où l'être sera perçu comme un paysage dans lequel on s'avance pour mieux en discerner les infimes détails.



Photos tirées de *Karl Bloosfeldt Photographs (1885-1932)*, par Rolf Sackse, Taschen éditeur.

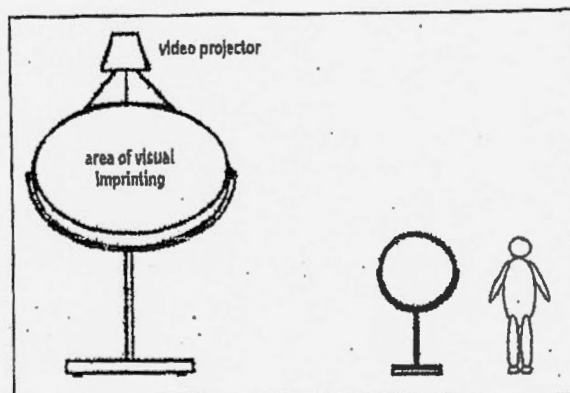


### Mot du concepteur de lumières/intégration technologique • Axel Morgenthaler

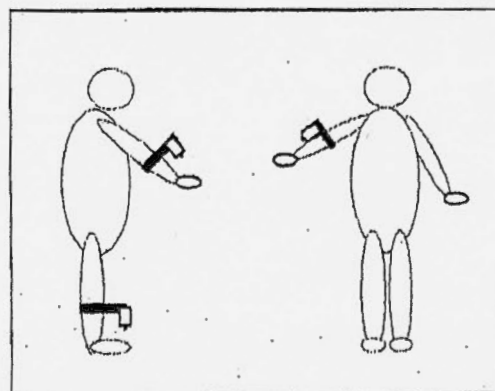
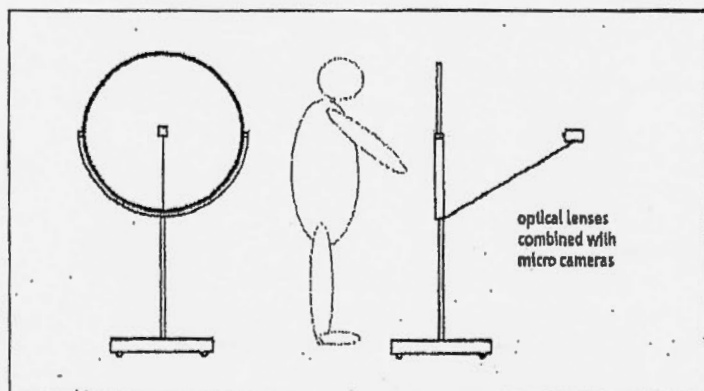
Rendre visible ce qui en des circonstances normales ne peut être perçu, voilà un des thèmes qui me fascine. Lors d'un spectacle de danse, une certaine distance sépare les spectateurs de ce qui se déroule sur scène. Cela permet aux spectateurs d'avoir une vue d'ensemble de la représentation. Or, la réalité intime entre deux danseurs, la cinétique des différentes parties du corps, et l'expression subtile des visages, tout cela demeure en grande partie caché pour le spectateur assis à une certaine distance de la scène. Ce qui manque pour ainsi dire à nos yeux, c'est la fonction *zoom* de l'appareil vidéo ou de la caméra. De la même manière qu'en science le télescope rend visible l'univers, le microscope électronique à balayage montre les atomes, et les microcaméras l'intérieur même de notre corps, je veux faire participer le spectateur à une expérience nouvelle et intime du monde et de la réalité scénique.

Ainsi, des instruments optiques (tels des lentilles grossissantes et des microscopes) permettront d'explorer la cinétique et la surface mêmes d'une main ou d'un pied. D'immenses loupes placées sur la scène transmettront directement aux spectateurs les images récoltées. Des microcaméras fixées à même le corps permettront d'observer séparément les différentes parties du corps. Une microcaméra fixée à un bras pourra aussi servir de nouvel angle d'observation des autres danseurs.

Les caméras seront reliées par câbles à la direction vidéo. Les images ainsi recueillies seront, en un premier temps, digitalisées et manipulées en temps réel. Puis elles seront, dans un deuxième temps, intégrées à ce qui se déroule sur scène. Cela signifie que les images ne seront pas simplement projetées, mais qu'elles seront intégrées à la chorégraphie pour interagir avec elle. Les surfaces de projection et les projecteurs demeurent quant à eux variables. Du matériel semi-transparent rendra possible la superposition des images projetées; des vidéoprojecteurs informatisés, comparables à des instruments d'éclairage robotisés, permettront à la projection d'interagir de façon dynamique avec ce qui se passe sur scène.



Bien qu'un grand nombre de recherches et de nouveautés, qui sont encore en partie des technologies en développement, soient nécessaires à la réalisation de cette œuvre, la composante humaine demeure toujours à mes yeux au premier plan. Car si ces techniques qui rendent visible l'invisible sont capables de nous montrer ce qui est caché, elles demeurent en elles-mêmes incapables de dominer l'événement qui se déroule sur scène. Elles constituent, entre le spectateur et ce qui advient sur scène, un intermédiaire enrichissant qui veut permettre au spectateur de pénétrer plus profondément à l'intérieur du réel et de l'émotion.



PRESS RELEASE  
Montreal, November 24, 2000

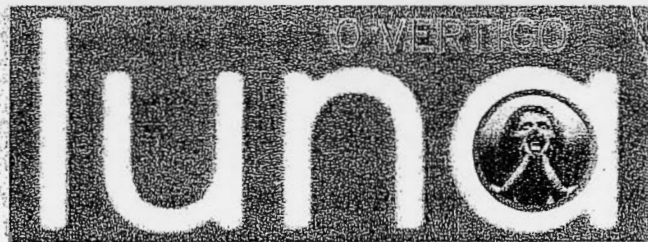
## World premiere of *Luna*, The new choreography by Ginette Laurin, in Lucerne, Switzerland

The world premiere of *Luna*, the most recent creation by O Vertigo and its Artistic Director Ginette Laurin, will take place on January 31, 2001, at the Luzernertheater in Lucerne, Switzerland. Ginette Laurin has made full use of the carte blanche offered by her co-producer Walter Heun to create a poetic, sensual piece that pays tribute to the human body in a work that uses optical technology to project the being as a landscape to be explored in all its infinite detail.

*Luna*, with its moonlike, fluid and crystalline choreography, focuses on the imagination through ellipses that reveal the hidden face of the dance. In a dynamic series of choreographic tableaux, the nine dancers in this astonishing piece move between real and virtual, reflective surfaces and black holes, and between stars and comets. *Luna* "reveals" what would normally not be seen by the audience, bringing spectators closer to the mechanics of the body, even tracking the subtle expressions on the dancers' faces and the raw emotion of their daydreams.

For this new production on the infinitely small and the infinitely large, Ginette Laurin has turned to a tried and tested team of designers. Axel Morgenthaler, working on his sixth creation with O Vertigo, is responsible for visual design and lighting. Carmen Alie and Denis Lavoie (Trac Costume) created radiant costumes. The soundtrack, a low-key combination of different pieces, was the result of a close collaboration between Ginette Laurin and Larsen Lupin.

The Luzernertheater will host the first performances of *Luna* on January 31 and February 2, 3, 8 and 9, 2001. The show will then travel to Germany, where it will appear at the Tanzhaus Die Werkstatt in Düsseldorf on February 16 and 17. The Montreal premiere is scheduled for October 5, 2001, at the Festival international de la nouvelle danse.



CHOREOGRAPHY BY GINETTE LAURIN

516

a coproduction of >> O VERTIGO

LUZERN TANZ AM LUZERNERTHEATER (SUISSE)  
FIDO

dancers >> ANNE BARRY, MÉLANIE DEMERS,  
KENNETH GOULD, PATRICK LAMOTHE, CHI LONG,  
KHA NGUYEN, ANNA RIEDE, MARIE-CLAUDE RODRIGUE,  
DONALD WEIKERT, DAVID ROSE

sound designer >> LARSEN LUPIN; GINETTE LAURIN

lighting and visual designer >> AXEL MORGENTHALER

costumes >> CARMEN ALIE, DENIS LAVOIE | TRAC COSTUME

photographer >> BENOÎT AQUIN

### O VERTIGO TEAM

artistic director and choreographer >> GINETTE LAURIN

rehearsal master >> RAYMOND BRISSON

executive director >> BERNARD LAGACÉ

administrative director >> GEORGINE VAILLANT

technical director >> JOCELYN PROULX

production director >> YVON BARIL

communications director >> LOUIS PHILIPPE MORIN

communications assistant >> CORINNE FAUCHER

agent >> MENNO PLUKKER

agent | The Netherlands >> VAN BAASBANK & BAGGERMAN

### World Premiere

January 31, 2001

luzernertheater, Luzern (SWITZERLAND)  
and February 2, 3, 8, 9, 2001

February 16, 17, 2001

Tanzhaus Die Werkstatt, Düsseldorf (GERMANY)

### Information - Reservation

Bernard Lagacé | tel. (514) 251-9177  
overtigo@cam.org

**P**rès de vingt années ont défilé depuis les débuts fulgurants d'O Vertigo en 1984, avec des pièces comme *Crash Landing* (1984), *Up the Wall* (1985) et *Timber* (1986). Sa fondatrice, directrice artistique et chorégraphe Ginette Laurin impose aussitôt ses vertiges comme incontournables. À travers des enchaînements chocs où le corps est en constant déséquilibre, elle exploite la crainte et la frénésie que suscite l'attrait du vide. Elle reçoit le prestigieux prix J.A. Chalmers dès 1986 et acquiert rapidement une renommée internationale en présentant ses spectacles au Québec, dans le reste du Canada, aux États-Unis, en Europe, au Brésil, au Mexique, en Israël et au Japon.

Portant un regard critique et amusé sur l'Amérique des années 50, Ginette Laurin signe *Olé* (1984), qui la révélera au public new-yorkais, puis *Chevy Dream* (une commande du Festival mondial des arts de la scène d'Expo 86) et *Full House* (1987). On retrouve dans ces pièces la perspicacité et l'humour qui ont fait les belles heures de la carrière d'interprète-pigiste de Ginette Laurin, qui a aussi dansé au sein du Groupe Nouvelle Aire entre 1973 et 1979.

En 1988, inspirée par le célèbre roman de Cervantès, elle crée un *Don Quichotte* fougueux qui exhale un parfum de flamenco. Dans *Chagall* (1989), une commande du Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, les personnages aériens du peintre prennent vie sous nos yeux dans une atmosphère onirique où les moments de douce ivresse succèdent à d'audacieuses envolées. La réussite sera immédiate et entraînera O Vertigo dans de multiples tournées internationales, notamment au prestigieux Next Wave Festival de New York. « Outre qu'elles mettent en scène des danseurs d'une virtuosité époustouflante, (...) les chorégraphies de Laurin, dont les éclairages et la scénographie constituent des éléments essentiels, sont des modèles d'intégration artistique », écrit alors Anna Kisselgoff du *New York Times*.

Avec *Train d'enfer* (1990) s'ouvrent des années qui la conduiront à explorer davantage la théâtralité et l'émotion, notamment dans *La Chambre blanche* (1992), où des êtres emmurés dans la promiscuité d'un lieu clos se confrontent et s'évadent dans les turbulences de l'esprit, du rêve et de l'imaginaire. Cette œuvre méritera à Ginette Laurin et O Vertigo le Grand Prix 1992 du Conseil des arts de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal (CACUM) et le prix Dora Mavor Moore à Toronto. Elle sera vue en Amérique du Nord, en Europe et en Asie.

Créé en 1994, *Déluge* envoûte les spectateurs du Festival de Chateaufallon en France, puis ceux du Festival internacional Cervantino au Mexique, du

Dancin' City de Copenhague, du Festival Roma per la Danza et du Wiener Festwochen de Vienne, entre autres. La magnifique musique de Jocelyn Pook fait des adeptes encore aujourd'hui (deux des pièces composées pour *Déluge* figurent dans la bande sonore du célèbre film *Eyes Wide Shut*) et ce spectacle inspire *La Nuit du déluge* au cinéaste Bernar Hébert.

L'année 1997 signifie une nouvelle récompense, le prix Émergence décerné aux diplômés de l'UQAM, ainsi qu'un nouveau défi: *La Bête* que Ginette Laurin crée à partir de personnages imaginés par chacun de ses interprètes. L'œuvre sera baroque, extravagante et théâtrale, à l'image des danseurs d'O Vertigo qui sont toujours profondément impliqués dans le processus créatif. « Sans peur, inépuisables et aux talents multiples, ils incarnent un idéal de virtuosité de cette fin de siècle. » (*Los Angeles Times*)

Les polarités et les dualités fascinent Ginette Laurin qui, de façon contrastante, crée ensuite *En Dedans* (1997), une pièce plus formelle, tout en finesse et en sensualité lumineuse. *En Dedans* vaut à O Vertigo le prix de reconnaissance, dans la catégorie danse, du Grand Prix 1998 du CACUM, et a été l'objet de plusieurs tournées en Europe, au Québec et aux États-Unis au cours de la saison 1999-2000.

Suit *La Vie qui bat*, chorégraphiée sur le célèbre *Drumming* de Steve Reich. Lors de la première en mars 1999 à Montréal, les musiciens de l'Ensemble de la Société de musique contemporaine du Québec interprètent la musique sur scène. Le public fait un véritable triomphe à ce nouveau spectacle d'O Vertigo, qui célèbre avec éclat son 15<sup>e</sup> anniversaire. En août 2000, c'est le tout New York qui vibre, avec la participation de la compagnie au *Central Park SummerStage*.

Le 31 janvier 2001, O Vertigo a présenté *Luna* en première mondiale au luzernertheater en Suisse. Cette œuvre, lunaire et cristalline, télescope l'imaginaire en usant d'ellipses et d'effets optiques qui dévoilent la face cachée de la danse. *Luna* fait l'éloge du corps en offrant une danse où l'être sera perçu comme un paysage dans lequel on s'avance pour mieux en discerner les infimes détails.

Avec sa danse énergique, inventive et intensément incarnée par des danseurs exceptionnels, Ginette Laurin est l'une des artistes qui se distinguent le plus dans le renouvellement du langage chorégraphique actuel. Chez elle, l'énergie du mouvement compte plus que la forme. Le geste vers l'autre et le contact humain se trouvent ainsi au cœur de sa démarche pour nous offrir une « danse qui a une âme » (*La Marseillaise*).

## APPENDIX J

Drawings from Diane Boucher's notebook



chambre à coucher -

lit / divan /

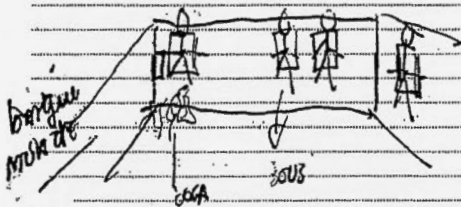
salle de bain - avec lavabo et toilette  
et armoire au milieu

les projections se mêlent au réel /  
le temps - joue sur le temps /

#### 5<sup>e</sup> tableau

- meilleur nous amène tous dans une  
dernière salle

- murs de briques blancs avec  
quelques alcoves carrées où  
sont installés 4 danseurs



décor magnétique -

3 urnes lumineuses en bois  
à capot (7) surmontée d'un  
couvercle ouvert avec  
miroir contenant deux lures  
compressées  
- 3 boîtes (petites) contenant  
aussi des lures compressées

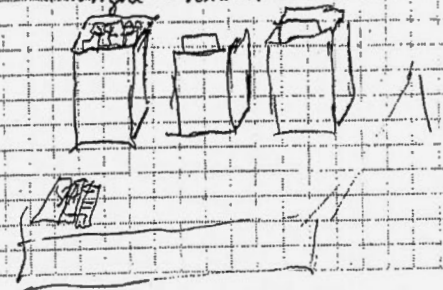
- projections de diapos pendant  
une durée du spectacle

- papier écrit / raïsse

- trois bracs scéniques

- costumes - robes rouges  
soutiens rouges

- musique - section à cordes



vers l'extérieur - petite terrasse où  
nous nous étendons là à un  
mur où des fenêtres s'éclaircissent  
sur des corps qui passent et  
repassent - les lumières qui  
s'allument / s'éteignent - bande  
son avec le commentaire (en anglais)  
d'un h et d'une F qui commentent  
le spectacle

#### 4<sup>e</sup> tableau

- soléons à l'intérieur : 4 danseurs  
étendus au sol - habillés en noir

les rodage pour le japonais

T-shirt et pantalon pour les autres  
mouvements du sol / contorsions

on amène une table recouverte  
de verre avec du sable /

projections vidéo d'images de

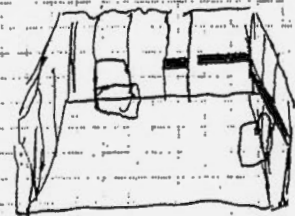
#### 15 juillet

Avignon

Michèle Anne de Mey  
Châteaux en Espagne

18h - Gymnase Aubanel

- décor : un grand rideau rouge  
à gauche  
2 chaises  
une barre de danse  
tout autour avec un fond  
noir avec une porte



commence de la chorégraphie  
avec les danseurs - trait  
net et tout en continu

## APPENDIX K

Schedules for company planning, tour planning  
and technical cue sheet



## PROJECTION D'ACTIVITES

Date	Endroit	Spectacle ou activité
JANVIER 2000		
17-31 janv.		Répétitions
FÉVRIER 2000		
3 février.	Voyage Montréal-Dallas	
4-5 février	Dallas, Texas	2 rep. Chagall et En Dedans
5 février.	Dallas	11h30-13h00 Master class (1 danseur)
6 février.	Voyage Dallas-New Orleans	
8-11 février	New Orleans, Louisiana	Résidence
12 février.	New Orleans, Louisiana	1 rep. Chagall et En Dedans
13 février.	Voyage New Orleans-Montréal	
15 février.	Montréal - Salle Pierre Mercure	Montage
16-19 février.	Montréal - Salle Pierre Mercure	4 rep. La vie qui bat
18 février.	Rencontre avec le public après le spectacle	
21 février.	Maison-Théâtre - Montréal	Montage
23 février.	Québec	Journée promo Ginette - Musée du Québec
22 février.	Maison-Théâtre - Montréal	13h00 & 19h30-2 rep. Duos
23 février.	Maison-Théâtre - Montréal	13h00-1 rep. Duos (jeune public)
24 février.	Maison-Théâtre - Montréal	13h00-1 rep. Duos (jeune public)
25 février.	Maison-Théâtre - Montréal	13h00 & 19h30-2 rep. Duos
26 février.		Relâche
27 février.	Maison-Théâtre - Rencontre public après spect.	15h00- 1 rep. Duos - (grand public)
MARS 2000		
8 mars.	Québec - Grand Théâtre	1 rep. En Dedans
9 mars.	Trois-Rivières -Ginette seulement - Promotion	(à confirmer)
13 - 24 mars.	Écoles - Ville de Montréal - ateliers	
25 mars.	Trois-Rivières - 2 danseurs - ateliers	
26 mars.	Maison-Théâtre - Montréal	Montage
27 - 29 mars.	Maison-Théâtre - Montréal	3 rep. Duos (jeune public à 13h00)
31 mars.	Trois-Rivières - Salle Antonio Thompson	1 rep. En Dedans
AVRIL 2000		
1-2 avril.	Maison-Théâtre - Montréal	2 rep. Duos à 15h00
21 avril.	Voyage Montréal-Budapest	
24 avril.	Budapest, Hongrie	Montage
25-26 avril.	Budapest, Hongrie - TRAFQ	2 rep. En Dedans
MAI 2000		
5-6 mai	Villeneuve d'Ascq, France	2 rep. En Dedans
6 et 7 mai.	Villeneuve d'Ascq, France	Ateliers (Marie-Claude et 1 danseur)
11-13 mai.	Palermo, Italie	3 rep. En Dedans
<del>17-18 mai.</del>	<del>Rome, Italie - Centre Rinaldi</del>	<del>2 rep. En Dedans (à confirmer)</del>
21 mai.	CONGÉ DANSEURS	
JUIN 2000		
1-30 juin	CONGÉ DANSEURS	
25-30 juin	Buenos Aires - Teatro General San Martin	Création En Dedans (Ginette + Ken et M.C.)

<b>JUILLET 2000</b>		
1-31 juillet	CONGÉ DANSEURS	
1-6 juillet	Buenos Aires - Teatro General San Martin	Création En Dedans (Ginette + Ken et M.C.)
7-13 juillet	Buenos Aires - Teatro General San Martin	Ken et Marie-Claude
14-30 juillet	Buenos Aires - Teatro General San Martin	Marie-Claude seulement
31 juillet.	Buenos Aires	Ginette et Marie-Claude
<b>AOUT 2000</b>		
1-6 août	CONGÉ DANSEURS	
1-7 août	Buenos Aires - Teatro General San Martin	Création En Dedans
6 août.		Retour à Montréal Marie-Claude
8 août.	Buenos Aires - Teatro General San Martin	1ère En Dedans (Ballet contemporaneo)
9 août.		Retour à Montréal Ginette
7-11 août.	Répétitions En Dedans	
14-21 août.	Jacob's Pillow, Lee, Mass.	6 rep. En Dedans + résidence
23-31 août.	Répétitions nouvelle création	
<b>SEPT. 2000</b>		
1-30 sept.	Répétitions nouvelle création	
<b>OCT. 2000</b>		
1-31 octobre.	Répétitions création	
<b>NOV. 2000</b>		
1-30 novembre.	Répétitions création	
<b>DÉC. 2000</b>		
1-22 décembre.	Répétitions création	
<b>JANV. 2001</b>		
15-30 janv.	Répétitions à Lucerne, Suisse	
31 janvier.	Première nouvelle création	1 rep. création
<b>FEV. 2001</b>		
2-3 février.	Lucerne, Suisse - Luzernere Theater	2 rep. création
6-7 février.	Lucerne, Suisse - Luzernere Theater	2 rep. création
8-11 février.	Lucerne, Suisse - Luzernere Theater	options représentations nouvelle création
18-28 fév.	Royaume-Uni	En Dedans (à confirmer)
fév.	Glasgow, Écosse - New Moves Fest.	En Dedans ou La Vie qui bat (à confirmer)
<b>MARS 2001.</b>		
1-10 mars.	Royaume-Uni	En Dedans (à confirmer)
<b>AVRIL 2001.</b>		
avril	The Joyce Theater - New York	6 rep. En Dedans (à confirmer)
16-21 avril	Chicago Dance Center	Résidence et 3 rep. Chagall et En Dedans

# MARCIER

## janvier 2001

Dimanche	Lundi	Mardi	Mercredi	Jeudi	Vendredi	Samedi
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
	CONGÉ	AM CONGÉ	9 à 23HRE (3 SERVICES 4H) MONTAGE D: POSSIBILITÉ RÉP EN STUDIO	9 à 13HRE FIN MONTAGE 14 à 18HRE DENSITÉ SON 19 à 23HRE REPÉTITION (LUXE)	9 à 18HRE INTENSITÉS LX 19 à 23HRE REPÉTITION	9 à 18HRE INTENSITÉ LX 19 à 23HRE REPÉTITION
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9 à 13H00 RACCORDS TECH 14 à 18H00 REPÉTITION GÉNÉRALE D: CONGÉ	9 à 13H00 RACCORDS TECH 14 à 18H00 REPÉTITION 19 à 23H00 CARPET ATA	9 à 13H00 DEPOT ATA + RACCORDS TECH 14 à 18H00 REPÉTITION FINALE 19 à 23H00 DEMONTAGE ET OFFRE	PRÉPARATION ORG	PRÉPARATION CARP	PICK-UP ATA ↓ DÉPART CARPO OUD ZURICH	DÉPART ÉQUIPE OUD ZURICH
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
ARRIVÉE ÉQUIPE OUD ZURICH	10H00 à 17H00 ESSAYAGES MEETING DÉPARTEMENT VÉRIFICATION DU MATOS APRÈS TRANSPORT LIVRAISON ÉQUIPEMENT	16H00 à 18H00 MONTAGE KIT RÉPÉT ARRIVÉE ÉQUIPEMENT 16H00 19H00 à 23H00 REPÉTITION SUR SCÈNE 9 à 17H00 POSSIBILITÉ ESSAYAGE COSTUMES	10H00 à 14H00 REPÉTITION SUR SCÈNE 14H00: DÉMONTAGE + POSSIBILITÉ ESSAYAGE	9H30 à 10H30 MONTAGE TAPIS + PENSE 10H30 à 13H30 REPÉTITION SUR SCÈNE SÉANCE POUR POUCE 13H30 DÉMONTAGE 14H00 PLANS FINAL LX	T: PLANS LX FINAL + MONTAGE DES LX D: REPÉTITION SDR 13 à 17H00 + POSSIBILITÉ ESSAYAGE	CONGÉ TECH + D.
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
CONGÉ TECH + D. ARRIVÉE ALAIN + SONO	8 à 23H00 MONTAGE GÉNÉRAL ARRIVÉE DARDEN D: 13 à 17H00 RÉPÉT (SDR) + POSSIBILITÉ ESSAYAGES	8 à 12H00 INTENSITÉS LX 14 à 17H30 REPÉTITION SUR PLATEAU 19 à 23H00 INTENSITÉS LX D: 13H00 RÉPÉT PLATEAU + POSSIBILITÉ ESSAYAGES	T: FIN INTENSITÉS LX INTENSITÉS SON + POSSIBILITÉ MONTAGE SON + DÉMONTAGE D: 13 à 17 RÉPÉT (SDR) + POSSIBILITÉ DERNIERS ESSAYAGES	T: FIN MONTAGE SON FINALISÉ ÉCLAIRAGE " " DECOR + VIDÉO D: 13 à 17 RÉPÉT (SDR) + POSSIBILITÉ DERNIERS ESSAYAGES	T: IDEM 25/01 D: 13 à 17 RÉPÉT. (SDR) + POSSIBILITÉ DERNIERS ESSAYAGES	CONGÉ TECH + D.
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
CONGÉ TECH + D. ARRIVÉE D. LEQUERRIS	8 à 12H00 MONTAGE 14H00 à 17H30 FIN MONTAGE 19 à 23H00 REPÉTITION	8 à 12H00 RACCORDS 14 à 17H30 GÉNÉRALE 1 19 à 23H00 PRÉPARATION + GÉNÉRALE 2	8 à 12H00 RACCORDS 14 à 17H30 GÉNÉRALE 3 20H00 10RE REP 21H15 DÉMONTAGE TOTAL			

Section		
Prologue	0.00	30. PAT. 421. M.C. 45. ANNA. 1.02. M.C.P. MEL. (ANANT) 1.46. TOUS.
Post-Prologue		8:50
Quatuor Garçon		14:00
Soi des amoureux		16:16. ENTRE FILLES (JANIN) 16:45 DÉBUT SOL. 18:25 F.I.N
Forme et abandon		18:42. DÉBUT MARIAGE.  21:10
Gestuelle secrète		21:15 ENTRE GROSSES 21:30. 1 <sup>re</sup> GESTUELLE
Quatuor loin-proche		24:47 ENTRE COUPLE  28:02 F.I.N
Transition		28:09 ENTRE FILLES
Anti-loupe		30:05  32:20 F.I.N → STOP
Loupe	<u>CUT.</u>	32:35 DÉBUT ALSIGLE 37:00 F.I.N
Duo M.C. et Anna	C.D. 4:13 C.D. 4:14	37:00 DÉBUT DEOS
Duo Form & Aband. (Ken et Kha (David))		39:07 ENTRE GARÇONS  40:16
Femmes en robes		40:16. ENTRE CHI. (BACK) 41:36. DÉBUT CHAÎNE SOL. 44:40. ENTRE GARÇONS
Transition Bloc		45:56. ENTRE BLOC
Projection sur la robe		46:38. PROJECTION



# Luna

524  
515

Méduse solo luna Anne		48:14 - PROJECTION CICLO
Transition orbite		49:53 ENTRE M.C
Sous la robe de la lune		50:57 - DEBUT DUOS 51:39 F.I.N
Transition pour sortie du bloc		51:39 - DEBUT DUOS M.C. ANNE
Les sélénites		53:20. ENTRE GARÇON 57:10. ENTRE FILLE 57:28 TEXTE 59:00 F.I.N
La leçon		59:00 F.I.N
Les 21		1:00 - DEBUT.
Les balles de la luna Pi		1:01.50. 1:06.21 - ENTRE TOUS
Transition		1:06.52. F.I.N MUSIQUE
Lunanne		1:07.35. DEBUT ANNE 1:08.35. ENTRE FILLES
Lunchi		1:08.45. DEBUT CHI
Quatuor Grand Moyen		1:09.28 DEBUT.
Transition Groupe		1:10.15 ENTRE GROUPE. 1:11:48 - SORTIE GROUPE
Finale		1:12.25 - F.I.N. BEAT. 1:13:30 F.I.N.

## APPENDIX L

Notation for a movement sequence from  
the notebook of dancer Mélanie Demers



Melanie  
Solo phrase  
Sept 27, 2000

②

2 poignées de porte  
main / main  
toucher gauche droit  
main droite au ventre  
2 ondules main dr  
toucher doigts  
toucher temple avec doigt dr  
toucher coudé droit (2)  
2 doigts à droite  
toucher doigts rebondir  
croiser mains  
four main droite  
2 doigts  
renverser doigts  
toucher doigt en maison  
" " à la bouche  
renverser au ventre  
petit saut  
main gauche  
frapper  
prendre pause  
shaker les doigts  
main ds main  
à la cuisse  
rebondir  
ondulation main droite  
main / pause  
main droite ds gauche  
gauche monte

①

main tourne  
ping  
renverse  
2 fois main dr en bas  
attrappe  
écoute  
doigt en S  
main en haut  
doigt à la bouche  
doigt à droite  
2 fois cercle  
bras cassé  
plonger / à droite  
main gauche sur droite  
marcher  
main au ventre  
lance droite  
doigts  
frapper main  
rebondir  
chercher  
déposer et —

## APPENDIX M

The *Luna* project's projected budget

**MONTAGE FINANCIER DE LA NOUVELLE CRÉATION "LUNA"**  
**O VERTIGO 2001**

	05/12/00	10/03/01	
	O Vertigo Révisé	Réel	code bgt
<b>Dépenses</b>			
<b>Cachets et honoraires</b>			
Scénographie et Lumières (Axel Morgenthaler)	12 000,00 \$	12 000,00 \$	5532
Costumes (Trac Costumes)	8 000,00 \$	8 000,00 \$	5532
Musique, conception préliminaire (Darden Smith)	7 500,00 \$	7 500,00 \$	5532
Conception sonore (Larsen Lupin)	3 000,00 \$	3 000,00 \$	
Direction de production	12 000,00 \$	12 000,00 \$	5532
Vidéographie	5 000,00 \$		5532
<b>Sous-Total Cachets des concepteurs :</b>	<b>47 500,00 \$</b>	<b>42 500,00 \$</b>	<b>5532</b>
<b>Salaires</b>			
Personnel de production	3 725,00 \$	3 535,89 \$	5532
<b>Sous-Total Salaires :</b>	<b>3 725,00 \$</b>	<b>3 535,89 \$</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Dépenses de production</b>			
Équipements vidéo et Films	20 000,00 \$	18 512,40 \$	5496
Scénographie et accessoires	15 500,00 \$	14 683,84 \$	5471
Costumes	15 000,00 \$	15 636,76 \$	5461
Sessions de travail Darden à Montréal et Jacobs Pillow	2 443,68 \$	2 578,45 \$	5535
Location de studio (enregistrement et mixage)	1 600,00 \$	2 180,00 \$	5480
Achat CD et recherche	400,00 \$	489,69 \$	5480
Caisses de transport	2 800,00 \$	2 575,98 \$	5450
Recherche et Développement	5 000,00 \$	4 034,06 \$	5425
Location Éclairages, effets spéciaux	6 000,00 \$	6 360,15 \$	5490
Location Son, équipements	4 200,00 \$	2 203,04 \$	
Maquillages et Coiffures	1 500,00 \$	341,57 \$	5500
<b>Sous-Total Dépenses de production :</b>	<b>74 443,68 \$</b>	<b>69 595,95 \$</b>	<b>32%</b>

**Préproduction à Luzerne (du 9 au 16 sept. et du 4 au 11 nov.)**

Concepteur de Lumières et Scénographe (transport et perdiems)

Directeur de production (transport et perdiems)

Concepteur des costumes (transport et perdiems)

Directeur technique (transport et perdiems)

(Luzern assure le logement)

O	Vertigo	0/0
2 300,00 \$	1%	5840/5845
1 735,00 \$	1%	5840/5845
1 740,00 \$	1%	5840/5845
1 485,00 \$	1%	5840/5845
7 260,00 \$	3%	

**Sous-Total Dépenses de voyage :**

**Dépenses de production : Répétitions (9 jours à Montréal)**

Directeur technique

Personnel technique

Technicien Vidéo

Locallon d'équipement

1 500,00 \$	1%	5531
5 000,00 \$	2%	5531
2 000,00 \$	1%	5455
8 500,00 \$	4%	

**Sous-Total Répétitions :**

**Dépenses totales de création :**

141 428,68 \$	62%	
130 931,22 \$	61%	

**Résidence à Luzerne (2 semaines)**

Personnel technique

6 210,00 \$	3%	
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**Sous-Total Salaires et cachets à Luzerne :**

6 210,00 \$	3%	
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**Frais de transport et per diems**

Hébergement (17 pers. X 18 nuits + 13 pers. X 9 nuits @ 120 \$/ch)

Per diems (13 pers. X 28 jrs + 4 pers. X 19 jrs @ 70 \$/pers.)

Transport International des membres de la compagnie (17 pers.)

Cargo pour décor et équipements

Frais de courtage et camel ATA

Transport local Montréal

Transport local Europe

Divers (frais de communication et autres)

Assurances

31 920,00 \$	14%	5805
20 400,00 \$	9%	5810
21 850,00 \$	10%	5815
923,56 \$	8%	5830
1 019,81 \$		
1 250,00 \$	1%	5825/5835
4 000,00 \$	2%	5870/5871
79 420,00 \$	35%	

**Sous-Total Frais de transport et per diems :**

79 420,00 \$	35%	
--------------	-----	--

**Dépenses totales à Luzerne :**

84 522,94 \$	39%	
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**Grand Total (Création - Production - Résidence - Première) :**

227 058,68 \$	100%	
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## APPENDIX N

A sample of handwritten fieldnotes along with  
Riede's response in fieldnote book

Fieldnotes - Sept. 13, 2000 O'Hertigs.

when dancing, dancers' expressions, feeling states are choreographed - they don't reveal the effort of their dancing.

☆ ga marche - time + space give what effect? (she acknowledges dancers' natural mut) - "good (in English!)" - des fois ga marche, des fois ga marche pas - a false & anna bursts into strong laughter (release) ginette demonstrates what she wants by replacing M-C - anna makes a suggestion (2x) & they try it - "prendre ton temps, I parce que c'est trop systematic" - "c'était bon parce ce que t'es pas trop sautillé" (chopped as she pivoted - a smooth turn) - anna ~~is~~ makes strong emotional reactions to mistakes, surprises

☆ why does a piece "work"? for artists, audiences, critics

TIME: sustained & quick

BODY: gestures, weight, tipping, & springing

Raymond intervenes w/ a technical suggestion about timing of M-C's arms - he takes care of ~~details~~ specific aspects w/ certainty

dancers don't question choices, only make suggestion to help make things work technically - focus: at each other's bodies, their own gestures, out into space at eye level

patrick likes creation processes: mystery, curiosity - "différent que la vie straight"



Fieldnotes ~~from~~ Sept. 13 '00

Antje: read my notes, so did Ken!  
 Likes the way I bring images alive,  
 said "you could write children's books!"  
 Has an idea why something "works or not!"  
 for Ginette (suspecting)  
 if something is too self-conscious  
 she tries to keep us busy to  
 get our concentration...

Feedback from Ken + Antje on my field notes:  
 Ken - could change our relationship to you +  
 the things we do - is it dangerous?  
 K + A - very enlivened, you should write  
 children's books!; we never know where  
 you will begin your observations...

Hi Dena, here is my first comment!

As for the meaning and interpretation of the dance:

For me, personally, at first there is only the movement.

Ginette gives only the movement, without any suggestions for meaning. So, for quite a while I am just trying to work it out technically. Then after a while Ginette might say "Yes, I like the interpretation," without me really knowing what I did. It seems to me Ginette likes things very natural, without any imposed interpretation.

Only later on she gives more detailed directions, sometimes very specific, but mostly more vague. The real meaning behind every gesture is completely up to us, I feel.

Once I have the basic technical part integrated into my body I start wondering about the meaning.

I go by what it means for myself and what I would like to express, even if sometimes it is only the joy to move. In some sequences I search for meanings for every single gesture, but that takes a really long time and somehow never ends, even when we have been performing the piece for quite a while, since I keep changing or clarifying the meaning to stay interested and alive in the movement.

Anna

## APPENDIX O

Demers' written comments on her interview transcription

MELANIE DEMERS: Mais c'est dur à faire.

DENA: (pause) C'est... de prendre ton rythme à toi, pour créer?

MELANIE DEMERS: Oui. Parce qu'on attend beaucoup. Ah – c'est ça! On attend beaucoup des chorégraphes, qui se renouvellent à chaque pièce puis que ça soit nouveau... puis que ça soit en même temps leur style, mais nouveau. Il y a beaucoup de paradoxes. Puis c'est dur à trouver, c'est dur d'élaborer, puisque c'est élaborer un vocabulaire, des concepts... puis trouver une structure de travail aussi avec les danseurs, ça, je trouve ça...

DENA: Difficile?

MELANIE DEMERS: Oui, c'est assez complexe.

DENA: Difficile de se renouveler à chaque fois, à réinventer notre danse. Comment tu vises à aborder ça? Est-ce que tu veux aussi aller contre-courant à cette tendance ou trouver une façon de la vivre?

MELANIE DEMERS: C'est sûr que j'aimerais ça, apporter toujours quelque chose de neuf à chaque pièce. Je pense que c'est de prendre le temps entre chaque pièce. De laisser la vie... vivre. De se laisser le temps de vivre un peu pour se renouveler soi-même. Puis après ça être capable de renouveler son travail.

\* DENA: (pause) Autre chose? Oui...

MELANIE DEMERS: Non.

DENA C'est beau. J'appelle ça un entrevue 'exploratoire' — c'est pour moi de découvrir quelles sont les façons de voir mon sujet.

MELANIE DEMERS: Mais je pense que tu me connaissais.

DENA: Oui, mais on ne s'est jamais parlé de cette manière en particulier. C'est nouveau pour moi.

FIN

Je me questionne maintenant sur la capacité à la danse de dire quelque chose vraiment. Que ce soit un médium où les préoccupations ne <sup>sont</sup> pas seulement d'ordre esthétiques mais dont le contenu puisse être aussi social ou politique. Le rapport entre la forme et le fond. Je n'ai pas encore trouvé de réponses! Tant mieux. Ça me donne envie de chercher encore!

## APPENDIX P

Brochure for 2001 *O. Vertigo* summer workshop

## VERTIGO IN THE CITY

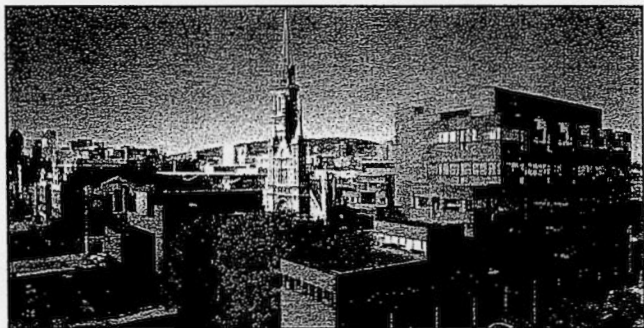
From August 5 to 25, the Université du Québec à Montréal's (UQAM) Dance Department will be the host of O Vertigo's fourth Summer Dance Workshop. Fun, discoveries (... and a few body aches maybe!) guaranteed with choreographer Ginette Laurin and the dancers of O Vertigo.

Located at the heart of Montréal's *Quartier Latin*, at the center of the various and most exciting activities the city has to offer during the summer, UQAM's Dance Department will open the doors of its studios located at 840 Cherrier Street (corner of Saint-André, next to Sherbrooke Metro Station).

O Vertigo's Summer Dance Workshop offers fifteen days of intensive classes — three weeks of exciting dance training — at a cost of \$1300 (Canadian dollars, taxes included). This program is open to professional dancers, advanced level students in professional dance training programs and performing artists with strong physical training. The workshop will take you to the heart of O Vertigo's repertoire, including the striking and original movements from *La Vie qui bat*, the evanescent and sensorial *En Dedans* and the delightful *LUNA*, the company's latest creation, as well as the interpretation work which has been the trademark of Ginette Laurin and O Vertigo for fifteen years.

## ACCOMMODATION AT UQAM

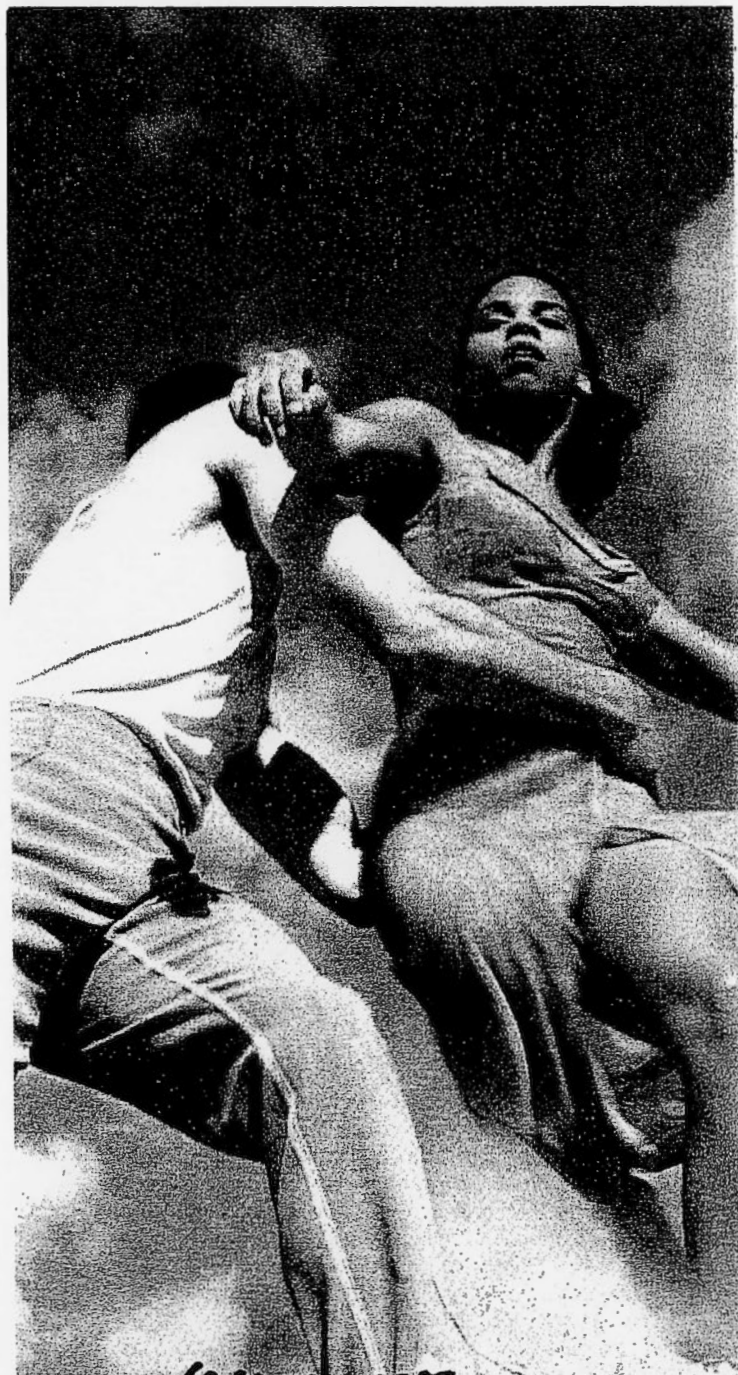
Only a ten-minute walk from UQAM Dance Department, very pleasant accommodations are available at the **UQAM Residencies** at an unbeatable price. These studios include 2 separate bedrooms, a living room, a full size kitchen and a complete bathroom. The cost for the three-weeks (21 nights) is \$740 Canadian (taxes included) per person.



## MONTREAL IS HOT IN AUGUST

O Vertigo's Summer Dance Workshop is intense! But if you still have the time and the energy, **Montreal is without a doubt one of North America's most exciting cities in August.** Check out the outdoor terrace restaurants in Plateau Mont-Royal, the exciting events in Old Montreal and the Old Port, the bike paths, Parc des Îles along the shores of the St. Lawrence River, the drummers making music on Mount Royal, the Montreal International Film Festival, the Francofolies de Montréal, the Just for Laughs Festival, the city's many museums, the Botanical Gardens, the Biodome, and the Olympic Park!

Cover page — Dancers: Mélanie Demers and Kenneth Gould Photo: Rolline Laporte



## summer dance workshop

from August 5 to 25, 2001  
in Montreal

register before May 31, 2001



## THE DANCERS\*

\*subject to change

O Vertigo's ten dancers are fully engaged in the creative process and their strong personalities deeply influence each work. Artists before being teaching specialists, they will share their passion for dance and their expertise as dancers with all their generosity and enthusiasm. Their extensive training in various physical disciplines and a pursuit of individual artistic goals which nourish their art will inspire the activities of this program.



ANNE BARRY



MÉLANIE DEMERS



KENNETH GOULD



PATRICK LAMOTHE



CHI LONG



ANNA RIEDE



MARIE-CLAUDE RODRIGUE



DAVID ROSE



DONALD WEIKERT



RAYMOND BRISSON  
Rehearsal Master

Photo: Michael Sabodan Dancers: Donald Weikert Participants: Angela Jones and Veronique Thibault

Photo: Michael Sabodan Printed in Canada

## PASSION - EVEN IN THE SUMMER

"After just two repertory classes,  
the atmosphere is enviable.

The commitment and concentration of the dancers  
and the availability of the teachers, all active members  
of the company, allows each individual to benefit,  
and to become familiar with the choreographic world  
of Ginette Laurin: as poetic as it is fiery,  
as physical as it is spiritual."

Andrée Martin, *Le Devoir* August 15-16, 1998.

"The idea behind this training program is to really get to know  
the individuals, to teach them, to give them something.  
It is a dialogue."

Joëlle Demulder, participant, 1998



## TO GIVE YOU A MORE PRECISE IDEA...

This program offers a variety of classes and workshops based on O Vertigo's repertoire (*En Dedans*, *La Vie qui bat* and *LUNA*). Participants will find training adapted to the specific goals and thematic requirements of this repertoire, including:

- warm-up classes designed to develop the specific qualities required to do repertory work (accents on physicality, muscular reinforcement, release techniques, voice, breathing, body and mind work, etc.);
- partnering and lifts;
- improvisation and creation workshops;
- interpretation work (always stemming from the repertoire);
- demonstrations by the dancers of O Vertigo twice/week;
- two shows at l'Agora de la danse comprising of excerpts taken from the repertoire and the creation work done with the O Vertigo dancers.

O Vertigo wishes to thank UQAM's Dance Department and Agora de la danse for their collaboration.



## TO REGISTER

Send the registration form, your résumé and a \$100 (Canadian dollars) non refundable deposit (send cash, cheque or money order) before May 31, 2001. Upon receipt of these documents and acceptance of your registration, O Vertigo will send you an invoice with all the necessary practical information.

Full payment for the program is due no later than June 30, 2001. Your place (workshop and accommodation) will be reserved only when your payment is received in full. Effective July 1, 2001, O Vertigo reserves the right to fill any available places from the waiting list.

For any cancellation after June 30, 2001, O Vertigo will retain half the cost of the program; housing costs will not be refunded.

All cheques must be made payable to O Vertigo Danse inc.

Please note that O Vertigo does not offer any scholarships. However, sources of financing exist to help cover the cost of this program. You may inquire about the professional training grants available to you.

*(for Canadian artists only)*  
The Canada Council for the Arts,  
Dance Section  
deadline — April 1, 2001  
Information:  
Monique Léger,  
1-800-263-5588, ext. 5506  
Judith Poskitt,  
1-800-263-5588, ext. 5502  
www.canadacouncil.ca

*(for Québec artists only)*  
Conseil des arts et des lettres  
du Québec  
deadline — April 2, 2001  
Information  
514-864-3350  
www.calg.gouv.qc.ca

## REGISTRATION FORM

**Hurry! There is a limited number of openings available.**

Please do not hesitate to photocopy this document and return it, by mail, before May 31, 2001 to:

### O Vertigo

4455 de Rouen Street, Montréal, Québec Canada H1V 1H1

Tel.: (514) 251-9177 Fax: (514) 251-7358

overtigo@cam.org

www.cam.org/~overtigo

FULL NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

TEL.: (HOME) \_\_\_\_\_ TEL.: (OFFICE) \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ I would like to register to the O Vertigo's Summer Dance Workshop at a cost of \$1300 Canadian (taxes included).

I include my résumé and my \$100 Canadian deposit:

- ☐ cash  
☐ cheque  
☐ money order

- ☐ I wish to lodge at UQAM residencies at a cost of \$740 Canadian (taxes included) per person.

I found out about this training program from:

a press release posted on the notice board at \_\_\_\_\_  
the ad in \_\_\_\_\_

a flyer that I received from \_\_\_\_\_

or that I found at \_\_\_\_\_

a friend told me about it \_\_\_\_\_

a message received by e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

on O Vertigo's Website \_\_\_\_\_

## GINETTE LAURIN AND O VERTIGO

Since beginning her career as a choreographer more than fifteen years ago, Ginette Laurin has established herself as one of the leading figures of the Montreal dance scene. With over thirty works to her credit, she is among those artists who receive great recognition for their renewal of today's choreographic language. Her

dance is inventive, risky, loquacious, and tinged with theatricality. Her training as a gymnast, her insatiable appetite for movement, and the obvious pleasure she derives from confronting the body's limits have led her to develop a prolific and unique style that renews the vocabulary of lifts, tumbles and leaps. "Acrobatic feats, simultaneous superimposed action and emotional richness are but some of the fragments of these hymns to love conveyed by the bodies



Ginette Laurin Photo: Michael Stoddard

of the dancers. These are vibrant personalities virtually hewn in rock." (Marie-Michèle Cron)

Ginette Laurin trained as a gymnast prior to studying modern dance and classical ballet in Montreal and New York. From 1973 to 1979, she was part of the Groupe Nouvelle Aire, one of the first Montreal-based contemporary dance companies. A much sought-after dancer, she performed for many choreographers in Montreal.

In 1984, Ginette Laurin founded O Vertigo, which has since gained an international reputation and prestigious awards such as the Chalmers Award and the 1992 Grand Prize from the Conseil des arts de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal (the Montreal Urban Community's Arts Council). She teaches occasionally at the Université du Québec à Montréal. She is also invited regularly to give master classes in contemporary dance (with or without her company) in Canada as well as abroad in locations such as the Tanzwerkstatt Europa in Munich (1996), the California State University of Long Beach in California (1997), and the Teatro Vascello in Rome (1998). Since 1997, her company offers a summer dance workshop attended by participants coming not only from Quebec and other Canadian provinces, but also from the United States, Mexico and Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom).

## APPENDIX Q

Coding indexes for focus groups, interviews and fieldnotes

## Luna fieldnote coding index

- (1) research event
  - (1 1) fieldwork techniques, procedures
    - (1 1 1) issues of language, text, tense
    - (1 1 2) interviews, focus groups
    - (1 1 3) becoming and being an ethnographer
      - (1 1 3 1) getting in, creating role, leaving
      - (1 1 3 2) participant observation
      - (1 1 3 3) interactions with participants
    - (1 1 4) fieldnotes, being in the field
    - (1 1 5) sound & image recording
    - (1 1 6) fieldwork scheduling, logistics
  - (1 2) personal journal
  - (1 3) analytic & theoretical ideas
  - (1 4) thesis conception & direction
  - (1 5) thesis procedures, ethics, permissions
  - (1 6) pilot study
- (2) dance event
  - (2 1) space, place, setting, set, context (where)
  - (2 2) time, sequence, duration, period (when)
  - (2 3) activities (what)
    - (2 3 1) activities central to event
      - (2 3 1 1) project conception
      - (2 3 1 2) creative process (mvt research)
      - (2 3 1 3) creative process (media integration)
      - (2 3 1 4) run-throughs, rehearsals
      - (2 3 1 5) auditions
      - (2 3 1 6) performances
      - (2 3 1 7) project mgt, funding, marketing
      - (2 3 1 8) filming (documentation)
      - (2 3 1 9) touring & outreach
      - (2 3 1 10) summer workshop & classes
    - (2 3 2) activities peripheral to event
      - (2 3 2 1) creative process (not Luna)
    - (2 3 3) chor-set-media description, LMA
  - (2 4) participants (who)
    - (2 4 1) dance company, role & work
      - (2 4 1 1) artistic director
      - (2 4 1 2) general director, agent
      - (2 4 1 3) dancers
        - (2 4 1 3 1) dancers' bodies
      - (2 4 1 4) rehearsal director
      - (2 4 1 5) artistic collaborators, filmmaker
      - (2 4 1 6) tech director, stage crew, costumers
      - (2 4 1 7) office staff
      - (2 4 1 8) board of directors
      - (2 4 1 9) company dynamics & ethos
        - (2 4 1 9 1) breaks, time off, offstage
        - (2 4 1 9 2) cultural politics
    - (2 4 2) venue directors, animateur, staff & crew
    - (2 4 3) audiences
    - (2 4 4) dance presenters, funders
    - (2 4 5) workshop students, other dancers
  - (2 5) artifacts, objects & documents
  - (2 6) meanings (why)
    - (2 6 1) meaning in lives of participants
    - (2 6 2) choreographic meaning, style & evaluation
      - (2 6 2 1) choreographer's intentions
      - (2 6 2 2) repetiteur's interventions
      - (2 6 2 3) dancers' interpretations
      - (2 6 2 4) audience's perspectives
      - (2 6 2 5) researcher interpretations
      - (2 6 2 6) when does it "work"
      - (2 6 2 7) specialist & other evaluations
    - (2 6 3) arts politics, history & economics



## **Luna focus group coding index**

### Free nodes

- (F1) small town, little dance
- (F2) dance and youthfulness
- (F3) dance and tv
- (F4) how dancers learn dance

### (1) data

- (1 1) focus groups
  - =(1 1 1) focus group context
- (1 1 2) focus group questions
- (1 1 3) focus group members

### (2) event description

- (2 1) participants
  - (2 1 1) audience
  - (2 1 2) dance artists
- (2 2) activities
  - (2 2 1) evaluation of performance

### (3) event meanings

- (3 1) of dance event participation
  - (3 1 1) audience
    - (3 1 1 1) first contact
    - (3 1 1 2) why attend, life meanings
      - (3 1 1 2 1) to admire
      - (3 1 1 2 2) to escape
      - (3 1 1 2 3) to feel
      - (3 1 1 2 4) to reflect
      - (3 1 1 2 5) to immerse
  - (3 1 2) dance workshop students
    - (3 1 2 1) entering the field
    - (3 1 2 2) why come to workshop
    - (3 1 2 3) why continue dancing
- (3 2) of choreography and performance
  - (3 2 1) audience's dance meanings
  - (3 2 2) students' mvt interpretation

## Luna interview coding index

### (1) choreographer

- (1 1) choreographic practice
- (1 2) choreographer's background
- (1 3) chor, drawn to dance & cont
- (1 4) chor's event meanings
- (1 5) choreograph's Luna meanings
- (1 5 1) choreographer's creative process/media int

### (2) executive director & staff

- (2 1) executive director's role
- (2 2) executive dir's background
- (2 3) exec dir, how drawn to dance
- (2 4) executive dir's event meanings
- (2 5) executive dir's Luna meanings

### (3) dancers, apprentice, repetiteur

- (3 1) dancers' role
- (3 2) dancers' backgrounds & lives
- (3 3) dancers, how drawn to dance & why continued
- (3 4) dancers' event meanings
- (3 5) dancers' Luna meanings

### (4) technical director

- (4 1) technical director's role
- (4 2) technical director's background
- (4 3) technical director, how drawn to dance
- (4 4) technical director's event meanings
- (4 5) technical director's Luna meanings

### (5) artistic collaborators

- (5 1) artistic collaborators' roles
- (5 2) artistic coll.s' background
- (5 3) artistic collaborators', how drawn into dance
- (5 4) artistic coll. event meanings
- (5 5) artistic coll.'Luna meanings
- (5 6) how art works for artistic collaborators

### (6) dance programmers

- (6 1) dance programmers' roles
- (6 2) programmer's backgrounds
- (6 3) dance programmers. How drawn into dance
- (6 4) programmer's event meanings
- (6 5) programmers' Luna meanings
- (6 6) when art works for dance programers

### (7) funder and board president

- (7 1) funder & board pres.'s roles
- (7 2) funder & board pres.'s backgrounds
- (7 3) funder & board pres, how drawn into dance
- (7 4) funder & board pres. event meanings
- (7 5) funder & board pres's Luna meanings
- (7 6) when art works for funder & board president

### (8) expressive specialists

- (8 1) expressive specialists' roles
- (8 2) expressive specialist's backgrounds
- (8 3) how expressive specialists were drawn into dance
- (8 4) expressive specialists' event meanings
- (8 5) expressive specialists' Luna meanings
- (8 5 8) Barass' Luna meanings
- (8 6) when art works for expressive specialists

### (9) audience

- (9 1) audience backgrounds
- (9 2) audience event meanings
- (9 3) audience Luna meanings

### (10) dancer's girlfriend

- (10 1) dancer's friend's background
- (10 2) dancer friend/ why dance
- (10 3) friend/ Luna meanings
- (10 4) friend's event meanings

### (11) communications consultant

- (11 1) comm. consultant's role
- (11 2) comm. consult's background
- (11 3) comm. consultant, how drawn into dance
- (11 4) comm. consultant's meanings

### Free Nodes

- (F 1) Québec arts politics & history
- (F 2) dancers' bodies
- (F 3) economics of dance
  - (F 3 1) economics of Luna
  - (F 3 2) economics of dancing
- (F 4) metier of dance
- (F 5) ethnographer's presence
- (F 6) company culture
  - (F 6 1) company projects not Luna
  - (F 6 2) company/ sexual politics
- (F 7) conceiving, touring & ending Luna
- (F 8) space: stage, neigh. & building
- (F 9) methodology
- (F 10) types of dance writing
- (F 11) documenting
- (F 12) evaluating dance



## APPENDIX R

Transcripts of dancer's testimonials (English version)  
from *Luna's* CD ROM, 2001

## Transcriptions of CD ROM testimonials, English version, 2001

Raymond Brisson: It's based on a circle. It has no beginning and no end. It's like we want to communicate like a satellite, want to give some words, let go some movement to catch some other human being and like some universe. It's the step, we put our feet on the moon to go further, very far.

Antje Riede: The piece was about exploring all of what's inside me – so the movements that I received from Ginette triggered different emotions inside myself – and for me it was just flowing through all of this, allowing it to be there – very different sensations -- all that's inside -- its not very intellectual for me, it's very physical, a very physical experience.

Mélanie Demers: While I'm dancing it, I try to be a human being, try to relate to other people trying to relate to other people and to other aspects of life -- as opposed to having solo parts where I have to speak to an audience -- or when I dance with other people it's a really human aspect of being with those dancers, those human beings -- even though there is a technological aspect to Luna, it stays really human, so I guess that's what it is.

Chi Long: Luna, maybe the principle image for me is maybe the world of le Petit Prince, the little prince, the story by St-Antoine Exupéry – I imagine myself on a planet by myself dancing either being witness to the stars and the planets or myself being the stars or the planets; it kind of goes both ways -- a very surreal kind of world -- everybody's speaking a very strange language, but very poetic language, that we're trying to communicate with an audience.

Ken Gould: What is good about the work with Ginette is that we have so much time to rehearse that we really don't really think about the steps when we are dancing -- so when we are dancing we are actually able to go beyond that into our emotional state or even into ideas that are in our imaginare, imagination -- but again for me every time I dance Luna I am a different person -- the more times we perform it, the deeper that the dance becomes because the dancers will be exploring and will go more and more, and go deeper and deeper into what it is for them.

Patrick Lamothe: Luna, it's a little trip, spatial, universal, with a lot of different colors and with mythic aspects.

Anne Barry: It's not a dramatic piece – it's not a piece where I consider myself necessarily an actor or somebody bringing an interpretation of the movement. It's a piece that I consider needs a simple presence, just the fact of being there, being on stage and being open, and letting yourself bathe in the lights and music. It's a bit like being in a very slow orbit in space, and you're aware that there are other dancers or people that are in orbit around you – and every once in a while the orbits cross, or every once in a while the gravity brings us together and we dance -- sometimes slowly, sometimes frenetically in space, with speed, with mass, and then the piece moves on.

Marie-Claude Rodrigue: The intensity, I feel the intensity to be very very little in comparison with the universe – and you have the universe inside you, and it explodes outside you.

David Rose: It's not that the technique was difficult, it was that there was a lot of technique in the piece, there was a lot of where to go, where to be, in front of the scrim, behind the scrim -- my relationship with the partner was beginning to find the seed ... that could grow.

Donald Weikart: About physics, and different issues in physics. She'd spoken to a friend of mind who was an astro-particle-physicist, and I was doing stuff, trying to find the texts about particle physics. And this sort of brought us into a long discussion about the phenomenon that in physics that when you start going infinitely fast, start approaching going infinitely fast, the infinitely small becomes infinitely large. You can find the universe in an atom, and so there's this kind of shifting reality. And for me that sort of imaginary kernel that I refer to somehow, the idea that in all these movements, even if they are infinitely small, or very very tiny, there is still another universe at the end of it. I think that's something that I try to imagine throughout the piece, sort of that if we are in a section of the solar system, if we just kept going and going into this tiny image then we'll find something really broad and huge.

## APPENDIX S

*Luna*'s CD ROM (in back pocket of document cover)

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